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ABSTRACT

This report describes strategies being employed to improve the lives of Illinois children and families. Lessons from the programs highlighted in this summary include the following: (1) Early childhood programs are essential to helping children be more successful in school; (2) Local involvement in finding solutions to pressing problems is essential to providing programs that will best serve the community; (3) Effective programs address the family as a whole and link services across problems; (4) Educational materials and practices must be used creatively to best meet children's needs; (5) Developing tutor-mentor relationships can provide children with valuable opportunities to improve their lives; (6) Programs must emphasize the acquisition of skills and practical resources to facilitate transitions from welfare to work; (7) Independent case advocates can ensure that the best interests of at-risk children are being served by the child welfare system; and (8) Family-oriented work policies and services enable more families to keep their jobs, increase productivity, and strengthen the whole family. Actions individuals can take to help meet the needs described here include spending more time with children; using voting power wisely; joining tutor or mentor programs; and donating materials to schools, libraries, or child care centers. (JW)

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# Illinois Kids Count 1995 BUILDING THE FUTURE

kids count

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VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN

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County by County Data and Blueprint for Action

## About Voices for Illinois Children

Voices for Illinois Children champions the full development of every child in Illinois. Special emphasis is placed on those children who live in poverty or are vulnerable because of discrimination, ill health or family stress.

Voices is a non-profit, non-partisan, citizen-based advocacy group addressing problems faced by Illinois children and their families. Through research, public education and coalition-building, Voices generates support from civic, business and community leaders for cost-effective and practical proposals to improve the lives of Illinois children.

Voices for Illinois Children acknowledges and dedicates this report to individuals who make a critical impact on the lives of children. These individuals include parents, teachers, volunteers who work with children in schools and through organizations, grandparents, uncles, aunts—and all who help children cross the bridge to adulthood through an example of caring, patience, creativity and humor.

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# Foreword

After a while, today's headlines don't seem to shock us anymore. "Third grader threatened at gunpoint." "Twelve-year-old gives birth to second child." "Number of children in foster care skyrockets."

The 10 o'clock news simply overwhelms us. For many, apathy, not to mention a good dose of numbness, remains the only reasonable response. *Today's problems are just too big. Nothing works. He's not my kid. It ain't my problem.*

As child advocates, we say, wait a second. Step back. Slow down. Yes, our children face huge obstacles today, but the system, in many instances, does work. Where it fails, concerned people just like you and me are teaming to fix it.

Just as we learned as children, you can't construct a good tree house without a sturdy tree. You can't raise a healthy, safe and well-educated child without a solid family and considerable investment of time and resources.

At Voices for Illinois Children, we've recognized the emergence of eight basic strategies, or building blocks, as we like to call them, that are making major contributions to the lives of children across the state.

Start early. Tailor schools to today's students. Link efforts. Establish one-on-one relationships. Advocate for at-risk kids. Build bridges from welfare to work. Invigorate our communities and promote family-friendly workplaces. All are vital to raising healthy, well-nurtured children.

Real-life examples of these strategies come in countless shapes and sizes. Some are private initiatives. Others are wide-scope public policy agendas. Most revolve around one simple theory: A handful of concerned neighbors reaching out to those in need can make a difference.

Voices for Illinois Children recently sent a team of reporters and photographers out to document a few of these building-block successes. The headlines in Building the Future might shock you, not for their gruesome detail, but for the magnitude of success a small victory can harbor.

Building a success story in your hometown may be easier than you think. Spending time with a child, registering to vote or simply encouraging family-friendly policies at work are actions we can all take to help kids.

The problems facing the children of Illinois loom large, but, as the following stories exemplify, a little hard work and a lot of determination can build brighter futures for our children.

# Introduction

There are efforts all across Illinois—some private, some public, some volunteer-based, others sponsored by churches, and businesses—that are using successful strategies to build the future by making life better for children. Some of those strategies remind us to: start early, tailor schools for today's students, link efforts, establish one-on-one relationships, advocate for at-risk kids, build bridges from welfare to work, promote family-friendly workplaces and invigorate our communities.

While our children may face tremendous obstacles to success—poverty, ill-health, lack of quality education, family disintegration—these strategies, and others, can make a difference in the life of a child and, indeed, in the future of Illinois.

Building the future takes effort, careful forethought and protection of investment. All of us—state policy makers, community members, business leaders, workers, advocates and parents—must take well thought-out and deliberate steps to ensure that our children succeed.

*Illinois Kids Count 1995* is one tool to help us build the future. In this document we include:

**Strategies At Work:** Some strategies that are the most effective in building the future are already at work here in Illinois. Voices for Illinois Children sent a team of reporters and photographers across the state to describe how these strategies are working, and what stands in the way of future success.

**Designing the Blueprint:** Identifying strategies that address the problems children and families face is particularly important as we redesign social welfare. Six experts provide insights to the strategies that work to prevent or mitigate some of the problems confronting children and families.

**Survey and Foundation:** Data and research on family stability, education and health help us understand the problems that confront children and families. To build the future we must understand the problems that weaken the foundation.

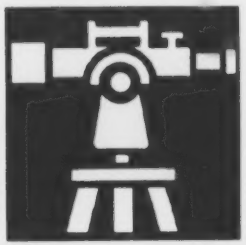
We all have a stake in building the future. If we don't help our children and families develop a firm foundation, and invest in strategies that help them grow, we will all pay the price.

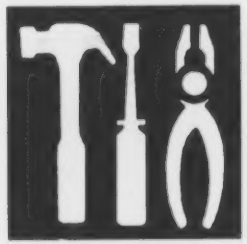
# Strategies at Work

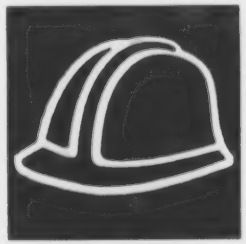
Many people have become disheartened and, indeed, overwhelmed with the prospect of addressing the problems our children face. This has led to the belief that we should dismantle the social support system and just start over.

Strategies at Work highlights some successful strategies already being used throughout Illinois. Voices for Illinois Children sent a team of reporters and photographers around the state to talk to the people behind these strategies. The following overviews provide examples of why certain strategies work and what prevents others from being more successful. The efforts highlighted here come in all shapes and sizes. They are local and statewide, privately and publicly funded, targeted and general in scope, for rural and urban areas, and prevention- and intervention-oriented.

These are only a handful of the good programs and policies operating throughout Illinois—ones we must nurture and support as we build the future. We also encourage you to tell us and others about other successful strategies.







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# Start Early

## LEARNING BEGINS AT BIRTH

By Patrick Barry

The three- and four-year-olds in Michelle Didesch's classroom are marching around with pillows on their heads, giggling and shouting as they act out a story they've just read about a hat salesman's encounter with some monkeys. Moments earlier, most of the students seemed to almost follow the words as Mrs. Didesch read from the big picture book, but one boy had buried his head on the teacher's lap, sucking his thumb. Now he is up, trying to balance the pillow and quietly mouthing the words along with his classmates. "Caps for sale! Caps for sale!"

A few blocks from downtown Peoria in a new red-brick building, 320 children aged 3 to 6 are receiving the kind of early education that research shows leads to success in school. The Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center is so well equipped and provides such comprehensive services, in fact, that it might be perceived as a one-of-a-kind "model program" that just can't be replicated. Look a little deeper and the truth emerges. The elements that make it work are available in most communities.

Valeska Hinton is a public school, a response by leaders in District 150 who felt that second and third graders were coming to school with too little preparation. It is the result of a major civic effort that involved a planning task force, some ingenious budget work and a supportive business sector. Most of all, it is a shining example of what can be done when a community sets high standards for itself and then reaches—high—to meet them.

"Everyone received the same message when they were hired, including me, and that was that we are here for the children and the families," says Principal Ken Hinton, a distant relative of the civil rights leader Valeska Hinton. "If your day ends at four o'clock and your work is not done, we expect you to finish it even if we can't pay you overtime. Everyone here, from the teachers to the custodians, knows that, and goes above and beyond."

With 60 local and national experts serving on the committees that designed the center, Valeska Hinton became a $7 million dreamer's ideal of what early education should be. Medical and dental services are offered on site, prompting a near-perfect immunization rate. The 20 classrooms are split into four "villages" where the teachers and families work together and get to know each other. A parent library offers bulging shelves of books, and a parent training room with a full-time teacher lets parents attend school while their children do. There is even a spacious planning room for teachers—with couches, not tables—that attracts the professional staff to Friday afternoon meetings. All of these components contribute to a quality early childhood experience.

***The elements that make the Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center work are available in most communities.***

Ken Hinton is so proud of the place that he shows visitors every nook and cranny, including the laundry room, the industrial kitchen, and the four auxiliary kitchens where teachers in each vil-

*The Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Center, Peoria.*

*The Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Center, Peoria.*

lage can make cookies or stone soup with their students. The tour is frequently interrupted, however, by small children wrapping their arms around the principal's legs and shouting their greetings.

Valeska Hinton may seem steps beyond the typical community's child care system, but that needn't remain the case. Much of the center's funding comes from familiar sources: Head Start, State Pre-Kindergarten, Title I, the Even Start literacy program for adults, and the local property tax. A dozen local businesses and corporations pitched in, including First Bank, Caterpillar, TCI Cablevision of Central Illinois and First of America. Universities and health providers came on board to help shape the academic and family support programs.

Other similarly ambitious child care facilities have been built in Illinois over the last few years, and a recently proposed policy aims to keep the ball rolling.

Under the "Ready to Learn" measure, school districts would be eligible for grants to create all-day pre-kindergartens such as Valeska Hinton, and child care centers would be encouraged to raise their standards for education, parent involvement, professional development and health services. The measure also would create a Ready to Learn Council to coordinate early childhood programs statewide, bringing order to the current amalgam of child-oriented programs.

In an editorial supporting Ready to Learn, the Chicago Tribune mentioned a Syracuse University study that found low-income children who had full-time preschool later cost the juvenile justice system an average of $180 each, compared to $1,985 for those not in a preschool program. Another study found that every dollar invested in quality preschool for low-income families creates a return of $7.16.

That number might prove conservative if the value of a family-oriented center is factored in. Look into any classroom at Valeska Hinton and you'll see more than just children and teachers. On any given day, there might be five or eight or 15 parents in the building, and twice or three times that many when there is an evening workshop or a village picnic. High school students work the classrooms during the summer, and "foster grandparents" are always in and out. Unlike so many schools that shut their doors tight as soon as the dismissal bell rings, Valeska Hinton and centers like it are creating communities where children and families are king.

That makes people such as Sherri Howard and Bobbie Lanier feel very good. Howard had been out of school for eight years when she brought her two children to Valeska Hinton; by attending classes while her children were down the hall, she earned her G.E.D. and got her kids excited about school as well. "My older one has a desk at home and works there while I'm studying," recounts Howard.

Bobbie Lanier is a foster mother of two students and at 48 is discovering for the first time the joys of parenting. She volunteers three or four hours a week and realizes that after the adoption goes through and her children move up to the primary schools, she'll still be active with their education. "This isn't just a drop-off program for parents," says Lanier. "This kind of place sets you up for a lifelong involvement with school."

*For more information: Ken Hinton, Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center, 800 W. Fifth St., Peoria, IL 61605, (309) 672-6810. To learn more about Ready to Learn contact Carol Dellaholmaye, Voices for Illinois Children, 208 S. LaSalle, Suite 1580, Chicago, IL 60604, (312) 456-0600.*



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# Tailor Schools for Today's Students

## PREPARING KIDS FOR TOMORROW'S WORLD

By Patrick Barry

The hallways are dim and the lockers empty at the Hoffman Technical Center in Machesney Park outside of Rockford, but three computer screens are glowing in the wire-strewn office where Sandy Sunderman is laying a path to the 21st Century. Her fingers flying between keyboard and mouse, she is loading programs onto a server computer that will function as a central nervous system for as many as 100 other computers around the school.

Sunderman is a veteran business teacher who took on computerization as a personal mission and ended up with the full-time job of bringing the Harlem Consolidated Schools, District 122, into the computer age. What began with six computers in each of a few second- and third-grade classrooms has blossomed into a districtwide emphasis on technology. Thanks to grants, corporate partnerships and a supportive school board, Sunderman has been able to equip more than 100 classrooms with computers and create computer labs where 30 students can lay their hands on keyboards at the same time.

***Like computer knowledge, bilingualism is a marketable skill, and thus engages students who might otherwise become disheartened about their economic future.***

One purpose of schools is to prepare students for the future job market. This school district realizes that computer literacy is what Rockford's machine tool manufacturers and financial services firms seek among their job applicants. In a few years, the students from the Harlem schools will be entering that job market, having booted up and networked and communicated with file servers from the age of seven. They will be ready to ride the waves of technological change.

*Students work in one of four technology hubs at Barr Ridge Middle School, Barr Ridge, Il*

Many school districts in Illinois don't have the financial ability to put a computer in front of every student—Harlem has been spending $250,000 to $650,000 per year to expand its program—but most schools can provide the kind of environment that turns kids on and readies them for the future.

Inter-American School on Chicago's North Side uses language and culture as a hook. Attended by Spanish-speaking children as well as students from non-Spanish-speaking homes, the school leapfrogs beyond traditional bilingual programs by teaching all students to read, write and speak in both English and Spanish. Multicultural and dual-language education is especially important in an area such as Cook County, where 1 in 16 students have limited English proficiency. Like the Harlem schools where students rotate through a computer-aided curriculum, the classrooms at Inter-American go back and forth between English and Spanish, every day, all year long. *¡Es verdad! Todos los estudiantes hablan español y inglés.* Like computer knowledge, bilingualism is a marketable skill, and thus engages students who might otherwise become disheartened about their economic future.

It is no coincidence that still another method of injecting excitement also stresses the economic payoff: the small schools movement. Founded in the 1970s in New York City and now spreading around the country, the small schools approach in-

volves breaking large institutions into more manageable units within the same building. Students choose the school they will attend—the focus is often job-related, varying from business and drama to manufacturing or health services—and because the whole school has only a few hundred students, each individual has a better chance to connect emotionally with his or her teachers and support staff.

"One of the things kids need is a caring, concerned adult, and that's a very hard thing to do when you look at the numbers and see 1,400 kids," said small schools proponent Bill Ayers at a workshop for Austin High School's teachers in Chicago. "But there are 140 professional staff here, so instead of feeling like you're responsible for 1,400, what if you think about being in charge of 10? You could make a big difference in the lives of 10 kids."

Splitting up schools is demanding and often political because it redistributes power within a building and forces teachers and administrators into closer working relationships. Yet, it has spread in Chicago to include several elementary schools and two high schools; its potential is touchingly told in a short video, "Tell No Lies," available from the Small Schools Workshop at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The video features individuals such as Erica Harris, who learned drafting and model-building at Chicago Vocational School and hopes to run her own architectural firm in Atlanta. At the Near mini-school at Bethune Elementary, a little girl steeped in a curriculum about entrepreneurship says she wants to be a doctor and run her own clinic. A young boy wants to be a judge.

Firing up the imaginations and career drives of young children will always be a primary role of schools, and while many routinely succeed in that mission, the high dropout rate in Illinois high schools and the continued struggle in so many school districts suggests that tens of thousands of students are not being reached. Better funding is one answer, especially in districts short-changed by Illinois' property-tax-dependent system of school finance. But more important than money—or a roomful of computers, for that matter—is a vision that grabs the students and holds them.

"We've traveled to other school districts that have invested in computers and have been amazed that in some cases there are no kids at the computers or there are coats thrown over them," says Sandy Sunderman. "We feel real fortunate that we've gotten beyond that. The computers go on first thing in the morning and I'd say about 70 percent of the time, they have students at them working."

Schools prepare our children to be part of the work force as well as participants in our society. These important tasks can only be accomplished if schools are responsive to students' needs, if they build self-esteem along with teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, and if they prepare children for the 21st century.

*For more information: Sandy Sunderman, Harlem Consolidated Schools, Hoffman Technical Center, 1102 Evans Ave., Machesney Park, IL 61115, (815) 654-5488; Bill Ayers, Small Schools Workshop, University of Illinois at Chicago, 901 W. Adams St., Chicago, IL 60607, (312) 996-9858; Eva Helwing, Principal, Inter American Magnet School, 919 W. Barry Ave., Chicago, IL 60657, (312) 534-5980.*

# Link Efforts

## PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CARE

By Linda Abbott

At 18, Martina had dreams of going to college—not of having a baby. She had gone to the Health Department in Jonesboro to get birth control pills. But it was too late. A pregnancy test delivered the news she had so desperately dreaded. She was pregnant. "I felt like my world had crumbled," she recalls.

That afternoon, Martina poured out her fears to Patricia Moehring, a case manager immediately assigned to her by the Southern 7 Health Department, which administers public health services in the seven counties in Southern Illinois. Moehring tried to console her, and assured the young woman that she would not have to go it alone.

"I tried to explain to her that having a baby didn't mean that she couldn't fulfill her other goals," Moehring said. As Martina's case manager, Moehring was able to refer the young woman to the state's Healthy Moms, Healthy Kids program, which provides an array of pre- and post-natal services designed to provide support and medical treatment.

In the months that followed, the Southern 7 Health Department linked Martina to a doctor, helped her obtain economic assistance to pay medical bills and referred her to the Women, Infants & Children (WIC) program for nutrition education and food supplements. Throughout the pregnancy and beyond, her case manager was there to provide support and to make referrals when necessary. Patricia also introduced Martina to Step-Up, a program that helps single moms go to college.

***We believe the family is the basic building block of the community. It seems only reasonable and logical to give families a good foundation of support that is coordinated and integrated.***

*DuPage County Health Department, Wheaton*

The strategy—providing access to comprehensive services through a single case manager—paid off. Today, Martina, the proud mother of 10-month-old Crystal, is attending college classes and studying accounting. She is grateful for the support, encouragement and education she received. "I'm definitely feeling more positive about my future," she says.

A vital component of comprehensive health care, appropriate case management can provide individualized assessments, referrals, monitoring and advocacy in helping poor families gain access to services. Some studies also have shown case management can help to prevent child abuse, improves parenting skills, and reduces unplanned pregnancies and high-risk behaviors. Healthy Families Illinois—an effort currently operating at several sites—relies on case management and home visits to prevent child abuse by working with at-risk families.

Providing quality case management and integrating services encourages a more "user friendly" or "consumer oriented" approach, which better coordinates services and eliminates frag-



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mentation of care. "Our services are much more tailored to each family and more personal interaction is achieved," says Sharon Mumford, Administrator of the Southern 7 Health Department.

Mumford says it's especially important to integrate services in rural areas because transportation is a major issue. "We did a survey and found out that only 9 percent of our clients had cars," she notes.

"The need to integrate services and do as many things as you can in one visit is just common sense," Mumford says. Southern 7 now offers a non-emergency medical transportation program that takes pregnant women and children to their clinic appointments. Mumford credits improved transportation and case management as playing a crucial role in bringing down the county's infant mortality rate, from 15.6 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 1986 to less than 9 per 1,000.

DuPage County Healthy Department is one of several health departments in the state that has integrated services. Long aware that the categorical nature of state and federal program funding created a health care delivery system that encouraged separation, duplication and confusion, the DuPage County Health Department began integrating services in 1991.

"There is a family planning grant. There is a WIC grant. There is a grant for pre-natal care and they all have different requirements," explains Connie Brooks, Associate Director of the Nursing Division of the DuPage County Health Department. "We've just brought all these programs together so that people can be seen as one whole person."

Before pre-natal and WIC services were integrated, a pregnant woman who needed both would have to make two separate appointments, travel to two separate clinic visits and provide virtually identical eligibility information for two different programs. In 1993, 1 in 5 children born in Illinois did not receive adequate prenatal care.

Today, a pregnant woman who comes in to the DuPage Health Department for pre-natal care gets a complete physical, is counseled by a nutritionist and dental hygienist and receives education about family planning and sexually transmitted diseases. "We believe the family is the basic building block of the community. It seems only reasonable and logical to give families a good foundation of support that is coordinated and integrated. We just don't look at the three-year-old—we look at the mother, father, the grandmother if she is there, all of the individuals who make up the family unit so the quality of life is enhanced," Brooks says.

Brooks notes that client surveys reveal a high level of satisfaction with the new approach. Clinic integration has lived up to and surpassed initial projections in streamlining procedures and better utilizing the county's resources to meet the growing demand for services. The Department reports that clinic visits have nearly doubled during the past four years, from 8,000 to 15,000. This means more families have access to the services they need, Brooks says.

The road to service integration, however, isn't without obstacles. Reassigning and cross training staff has been a challenge. As might be expected, the move to integrate clinic services triggered some turf issues and differences between professional disciplines among the division's 200-member staff, Brooks says.

Communication between the services areas is impeded by the lack of a networked computer system. The county currently is in the process of computerizing the referral process—a move eagerly anticipated by administrators and staff.

*For more information: Sharon Mumford, Administrator, Southern 7 Health Department, RR 1 Box 53A, Ullin, IL 62992, (618)634-2297; Connie Brooks, DuPage County Health Department, 111 North County Farm Rd, Wheaton IL 60187, (708)682-7979*

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# Establish One-On-One Relationships

## MENTORING MAKES A DIFFERENCE

By Patrick Barry

Carol Ann is a 23-year-old woman with a six-year-old son and a six-week-old baby. Marj Mitchell is her 63-year-old friend and pillar of strength; she has been with Carol Ann one morning nearly every week for the last three years. They talk, go to the park with the kids, pin and sew baby blankets, make cookies. "I like Fridays with Marj," says Carol Ann, who was severely isolated before hooking up with her mentor. "It gives me something fun to do besides watching TV."

Carol Ann and Marj are in the basement of the First Lutheran Church in Freeport. As an organist practices hymns upstairs, the two women talk about the relationship they've built through a program for young mothers sponsored by the church and Lutheran Social Services of Illinois. "We met here at a Christmas party," recounts Marj. "I remember Carol Ann was sitting at a table and was very, very shy. I'm pretty gabby, so I guess that makes us a good pair."

***Mentoring programs provide what no bureaucracy or support agency can deliver: personal attention and patience.***

As in any matchmaking, putting two people together doesn't guarantee a viable relationship. But for thousands of children and adults in Illinois, mentoring programs provide what no bureaucracy or support agency can deliver: the type of personal attention and patience that is helping to bring Carol Ann out of her shell and became a better parent. Research shows that this type of one-on-one interaction can be essential to overcoming various challenges.

Freeport program coordinator Karen Toepfer screens both sides of each potential partnership through a detailed survey and interviews. She emphasizes to adults who express interest that her program requires a long-term commitment and the patience to work with "troubled" teens. "Some of the girls have been in abusive relationships, and dealing with that can be extremely frustrating because you want to help them get out of it but they may not want to," says Toepfer, a lifelong Freeport resident. "You are there and see what's happening, but all you can do is offer support."

*Tenth grader Anita Gunartt and volunteer tutor Donna Giampetro at Cabrini Connections, of the Tutor/Mentor Connection, Chicago*

Successful mentoring relationships depend on finding a good match, which can be difficult. Toepfer says of eight matches made over the past few years, only two are now active. That isn't atypical, because such programs depend on a chemistry developing between two former strangers. But the benefits when the fit is right are well documented. A 1990 Harris poll of 400 students and 400 mentors found that 87 percent of the students benefitted. They raised their expectations, improved grades, kept away from drugs and improved their relationships with teachers, families and people of other races. As data on school dropout rates, adolescent substance abuse and teen pregnancy indicate, many of our children greatly need extra support and attention. Mentors also learn and benefit from these relationships, through increased awareness of new communities and the rewards of forming a lasting friendship.

More than 250 organizations provide some sort of tutoring or



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*Volunteer Justin Bradley and 11th grader Danny Sherrod at Cabrini Connections, of the Tutor/Mentor Connection, Chicago.*

mentoring in Chicago alone, according to the Tutor–Mentor Connection, a promotion and training organization that grew out of the successful Cabrini Connections tutor–mentor program. Unlike the Freeport effort, where mentors visit in their partner's home or a public place, the Cabrini program uses a centralized location where mentors and students gather together and form a larger support community. If a particular one-on-one relationship doesn't pan out, other mentors are nearby and often are already acquainted with the students.

The spark plug behind another mentoring effort is Juri Jones of the Chicago Academy of Sciences. She has taken 14 teenagers under her wing in a two-year program that gently encourages them into a challenging range of adult roles. They serve as tour guides at the museum, conduct laboratory research with Northwestern University graduate students, and during the summer become mentors themselves at week-long camp sessions with younger children.

On an August morning under a 95-degree sun, four of the teens were laughing and joking with each other and several adult leaders as they raised a heavy tent to shelter children who would soon arrive for a lesson on how animals protect their territories. The high school juniors were one year into the program and had each spent time in Northwestern's cellular biology laboratories. "I'm trying to find a vaccine for pneumonia in rabbits," explains one of the juniors, James Lopez, who came to Chicago only two years ago from Michoacan, Mexico. "We tried five different drugs including penicillin, but they didn't work."

Working side-by-side with their mentors, each teen learned a similar lesson about the slow grind of scientific work. Traci Tolcame recalls a "long and tedious" hunt for a cure to the Epstein-Barr virus. Kristen Nguyen examined skin cells from mice and Antonio Torres spent eight months transplanting the DNA of a firefly to make a brighter light. "I was working with the cells and proteins. I never even saw the firefly," says Antonio, clearly pleased with himself. "I had cut up a DNA chain at school, but that was made of paper. This was the real thing."

Standing under a cottonwood tree in Chicago's Lincoln Park, watching the teens as they ask the younger kids about animal behavior, Jones acknowledges that quick success rarely emerges from mentoring programs. More often, progress comes slowly. Kristen, who speaks Vietnamese and Chinese, talks quietly and has trouble enunciating some words in English, but she has learned to overcome her shyness and raise her voice when speaking to the other kids. Some students are strong academically while others accept help from a tutor. "Not all the matches work out," says Jones. "You have to keep up with them and make a change if it's needed."

Carol Ann and Mary plan to commute their Friday morning ritual indefinitely. Last year, Carol Ann spent time teaching reading in her son's kindergarten classes, "something she would never have done before," says Karen Toepfer. Better still, Carol Ann is more comfortable with her children. "With my first child I didn't know anything about how to be a parent; my mother took care of him," she says. "I am changed with Chad. Now I get up with him at night when he needs me."

*For more information: Karen Toepfer, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, 303 S. Galena Ave., Freeport, IL 61032, (815) 235-3707; Juri Jones, Chicago Academy of Sciences, 2060 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60614, (312) 549-0606; Daniel Russell, Tutor/Mentor Connection, 535 W. Chicago Ave., 2 N, Chicago, IL 60671, (312) 467-2889.*

# Advocate for At-Risk Kids

## SPEAKING UP FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN

By Mark Wukas

Call him Billy. Call her Sally. Or Sharon. Or Hector. Or Lee. The names go on and on as the tragic number among their ranks continues to climb. They are the child victims of abuse and neglect.

These children—in Illinois today, about 45,000 kids have been removed from their homes to protect them from further maltreatment—come from all backgrounds and all parts of the state. Conservative estimates predict that, by the year 2000, some 75,000 Illinois children will reside in foster care. Between 1985 and 1991, the rate of children who are victims of abuse or neglect increased 22 percent.

Foster care is intended to be a temporary haven where children await for their families to rehabilitate or wait for an adoptive family to be found. But statistics show that this "temporary" care is becoming a permanent limbo for Illinois children who are bounced from foster placement to foster placement and made to face prolonged uncertainty about their future. Far too many children are removed from their abusive homes only to encounter a different type of cruelty: the often painfully slow progress of an overburdened welfare and judicial bureaucracy.

But sometimes the Billys of our state get lucky. Sometimes they get teamed up with a person such as Linda Vandervoort or Eleanor Waring.

Vandervoort and Waring are volunteers with the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program in north-central Lee and Carroll counties. As CASA advocates, they keep kids from falling through the cracks of a complex, often intimidating court system.

"It's our role to keep the cases moving through the system to get kids to a permanent solution as soon as possible," says Margaret Green, a former college English teacher who for the past five years has directed the Lee and Carroll County CASA program.

"The common bond for our volunteers is a real concern for the kids," Green says from her office near the Rock River in Dixon. "Our volunteers really want to help them."

CASA is a nationwide organization formed in Seattle in 1977 and now operates 580 offices in 50 states. The first CASA program in Illinois opened in Cook County in 1986; since then, programs have been established in 20 other counties.

The volunteers are needed badly because the state's foster care system is overloaded. Case workers for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) carry an average of 60 to 90 cases that require one visit per month, with some DCFS workers struggling with additional cases, as well. Because of this staggering overload, judges, lawyers and even the case workers themselves do not always have complete information pertinent to a child's case when the court date arrives. The children who come through this system have suffered maltreatment and are likely to be overwhelmed and frightened by the court process. These children also tend to be young. In 1994, 70 percent of all children who were victims of abuse or neglect were under 9 years old.

*The Lee and Carroll Counties CASA, Dixon*

To provide more complete information—and to make certain that the child doesn't get lost in the shuffle—Green and case manager Susan Swegle run a network of 11 volunteers who currently handle 93 cases. Their office is petitioned to serve as an advocate on about 20 new cases each year. To prevent the case overload that overwhelms DCFS workers and court officials, CASA volunteers handle only one or two cases at any time. This individual attention is what is so desperately needed in helping kids.

CASA volunteers collect information from various sources so that court officials and caseworkers have the background they need to make better informed decisions, but, more importantly, so that CASA volunteers can make an independent recommendation to the court that is strictly in the best interests of the child. Often it is the perspective provided by CASA volunteers that enables judges to make better informed decisions.

"We're concerned that the court could send some children home before it's safe because the judge lacked the information and not everyone had done their homework," Green explains.

The Lee and Carroll County CASA advertises for volunteers through venues varying from public-service announcements to radio and newspaper ads to word-of-mouth. Those who apply are screened rigorously and then given 30 hours of training in advocacy and child-welfare by CASA staff and other trainers in a six-week program to help them understand the system that the children are confronting. Once the volunteers complete training, they are sworn in as CASA advocates in a formal ceremony. The current volunteers are 29 years old and older, with educational backgrounds varying from G.E.D.s to graduate school; most work, a few are retired.

*Linda Vandervort and Margaret Green of the Lee and Carroll Counties CASA, Dixon*

"We pull in good people," says Swegle, who came to CASA from the Lee County State's Attorney's Office. "We have those who want to give back."

Linda Vandervort has handled three cases in her five years as a volunteer, spending the past three years on one case alone. Eleanor Waring, a retired grammar school teacher who's lived in Dixon for 30 years, has had only one case, which lasted two and a half years.

"The reward comes when you see the progress the children are making and look forward to the good things that are going to happen for them," Vandervort says. "If you get too close and can't be objective, you're not doing your job. You have to keep the focus not on what the children want, but what they need."

In the case Waring handled, she was able to help the children by helping the mother after an abusive father had been removed from the home.

"It was reported as a case of neglect, but I didn't see it that way," says Waring. "The mother needed somebody."

The mother attended court-ordered counseling, parenting courses, and learned to budget a household. Waring was with her every step of the way, stopping in at the mother's home from time to time to make sure she stayed the course.

"The mother has just come a million miles," Waring says.

The Lee and Carroll County CASA program—like other social services—isn't without its challenges. The program operates on a $60,000 annual budget, with funds provided through state contracts, private foundations and the time-honored bootstrap methods of holding bake sales and selling Christmas cards. But the investment is paying off.

"I had one social worker complain to me that a CASA volunteer assigned to one of her cases thought her case is the most important one," Swegle recalls. "My reaction was, 'Yes!' That's what I want to hear."

*For more information: Margaret Green and Susan Swegle, Lee County CASA, 87 Crawford, Suite 111, Dixon, IL 61021, (815)288-1901*

***The reward comes when you see the progress the children are making and look forward to the good things that are going to happen for them.***

# Build Bridges from Welfare to Work

## STAYING IN SCHOOL, KEEPING A JOB

By Patrick Barry

On the other side of the tracks in Decatur, where the wood houses are crumbling and crack cocaine is for sale each night, a neat storefront offers young girls in trouble something they can't find elsewhere: child care and transportation. For teenaged mothers facing the strain and loneliness of raising a child, those two simple ingredients, along with a good dose of moral support, can make all the difference.

"It's better now that people are helping," says 19-year-old Shelly Manley, mother of nine-month-old Alexandria. With her daughter's father in jail, Shelly couldn't have finished high school and continued working at a nursing home without the assist she got from the Teen Parent Initiative. Fifteen-year-old Christine Beckett, another participant in the state-funded program, tells how caseworker Joyce Mingus settled her down in the hospital after she gave birth to Skyrishe at the age of 13. "I'll be struggling," says Christine in a little girl voice, her hands working nervously. "She told me what to expect and said she could help get me a baby carriage."

But a community knocked flat by job eliminations in the 1980s and vicious labor strife in the 1990s, dead ends are everywhere. No longer can a young person hope for a well-paid job in the Caterpillar, A.E. Staley or Bridgestone plants. Second-tier jobs at industrial supply companies are just as scarce, and even registered nurses find little demand for their skills. So the kid with a baby—whether a mother or a father—has little choice but to take a low-paid service job or apply for welfare.

Such bleak prospects have often seemed insurmountable in Illinois because most public aid programs didn't offer much more than welfare payments, cutting receptionists and up-by-your-bootstraps rhetoric. That is changing as the nation struggles to find welfare alternatives, and two Illinois initiatives show particular promise.

One is the Teen Parent Initiative (TPI) of the Illinois Department of Public Aid, which provides, in addition to child care and bus money, a wide range of support to stabilize the new family and keep young parents in school. The other program, targeted to a much broader population, is Work Pays, which encourages welfare recipients to become self-sufficient by enabling them to keep a portion of their welfare check and medical benefits when they find a job.

A tangible measure of success for the Teen Parent Initiative is on the wall of the High Risk Infant Registry of Macon County, in the Decatur storefront where Shelly and Christine found help. "This is what we're proud of," says the registry's executive director, Joanne Luckenbill, as she traces the names of more than 50 girls who either graduated high school, received a G.E.D. certificate, or advanced a grade. "People sometimes object to this word, but the key to our program is love. The girls know that we're here to help and that we really care."

*The High Risk Infant Registry of Macon County, Decatur*

There is a hard edge as well. Participants who don't keep up their end of the bargain—attending school and monthly workshops—are "sanctioned" by cutting off their aid, and the state's attorney's office tracks down working fathers to make sure they



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pay child support.

Most important is TPI's long reach into the community to offer positive support. At the local prenatal clinics, the infant registry's case managers have their own desk and offer help to every teenager who comes through. Babytalk, a parent education program, visits with new moms in the hospital and then again at the schools, the library, Head Start and the health clinic. The Decatur Day Care Center provides needed child care, while a local vocational school has a child care center on site and provides parenting classes as part of the day. And when a mom's interest in the program lags, Joyce Mingus or another staffer will catch her out on the sidewalk or call her before a meeting and send a cab if there's no other way to get there.

"We know each other pretty well," relates Pete Fox, a Planned Parenthood educator with a marine haircut and wooden beads on his wrist. He encourages girls to avoid a second pregnancy because it will hurt their chances to finish school and become self sufficient. In Illinois in 1993, about 1 in 8 first births were to a teenaged, single mother who had not completed high school.

While TPI focuses on keeping teens in school, the Work Pays program provides a financial boost to recipients of Aid to Families and Dependent Children (AFDC) who join the work force. Until late 1993, taking a low-paid job in Illinois usually meant sliding deeper into poverty as both cash payments and other benefits were reduced or eliminated. Not surprisingly, AFDC recipients often quit their jobs soon after starting, demoralized by a system that actually penalized their work ethic.

The new program still reduces cash payments, but only $1 for every $3 earned, and continues to provide health benefits, child care assistance and food stamps as long as income remains below the poverty level. Public Aid employees have promoted the program with buttons, posters and in-person pitches, prompting a 100 percent increase in the number of working recipients, from 14,100 in October 1993 to 28,400 by May 1995.

For a single parent with two children working full time at $4.25 an hour, the program makes an enormous difference. Instead of cash income of just $4,524 from AFDC, the household would bring in $13,401 when the federal Earned Income Tax Credit is included. Even a 20-hour job at the minimum wage would boost income to $9,016, almost doubling the household's buying power.

***The girls know that we're here to help and that we really care.***

The Teen Parent Initiative and Work Pays cannot, by themselves, alter the economic or social landscape of Illinois. But by providing encouragement and incentives to pursue school and work, they provide badly needed bridges away from dependency and towards economic self-sufficiency.

*For more information: Joanne Luckenbill, The High Risk Infant Registry of Macon County, 702 E. Wood, P.O. Box 28467, Decatur, IL 62525-8467, (217) 423-3100; Denise Smart, Teen Parent Initiative Manager, Youth Services, Illinois Department of Public Aid, 100 Bus Park Plaza, 3rd Floor, Springfield, IL 62762, (217) 785-0462; Karen Maxson (Work Pays program), Division of Planning and Community Services, Illinois Department of Public Aid, 100 South Grand Avenue East, Springfield, IL 62762, (217) 785-3300*

*The High Risk Infant Registry of Macon County, Decatur*

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# Promote Family-Friendly Workplaces

## SUPPORTING PARENTS, MORE A COMPETITIVE EDGE

By Mark Wilkins

They're producing more than gaskets and sealing products at Fel-Pro Incorporated. They're making stronger families and a more committed work force. The Skokie-based company offers their employees an array of benefits that meet the needs of families over the course of life—and, in turn, boost the company's bottom line.

"When we offer the kind of benefits that we offer, it takes some of the anxiety off the minds of our employees," says Fel-Pro Co-Chairman David Weinberg. "They [illegible] can focus on their work and ideas and make their work more effective."

*We owe it to those who work for us to help them solve the problem of working for a living while raising a family.*

The 78-year-old company is responding to the reality that dual income families and single-parent families are on the rise. Women comprise 47 percent of today's work force. In 1991, 68.1 percent of women aged 16 years and older with children under 18 years old worked, compared to 47.7 percent in 1975. Currently, in more than two-thirds of all two-parent families both parents work.

As the work force has evolved, so at least has this workplace—redesigning employee policies to accommodate the changing needs of working families and the new demands of a globally competitive market.

Through the benefits offered at Fel-Pro, soon-to-be parents can receive practical information and services about pregnancy and baby care, including pre-screening, pre-natal education, and medical and social services. The company's family leave policy was in place years before the federal law. Fel-Pro workers also have the option of flexible starting times to meet the needs of their families. And unlike neighbors who must ferry their children to child care before going to work, Fel-Pro employees may bring their children to the Skokie plant, where there is an on-site child care center and kindergarten program, both of which are state-licensed and accredited. Participating employees pay a portion of the weekly cost. With the child care center on the grounds, but in a building separate from the plant, parents are able to have lunch with their children—something that Weinberg says is quite common and something that child experts applaud as the sort of "bonding time" that is necessary to improve child well-being.

The benefits don't end with child care. Emergency caregiver service is available for children and other dependents who are ill. If a dependent requires only short-term care, Fel-Pro arranges for Family Care Services of Metropolitan Chicago to send a trained caregiver to the employee's home for up to five days per year so that the employee can return to work. Tutoring services also are available to employee's children with special learning needs. Fel-Pro has arranged for a One-to-One Learning Center to provide diagnostic testing and individual tutoring based on an individual child's needs. Again, employees pay a small portion of the cost and Fel-Pro picks up the balance.

Each summer, Fel-Pro runs a day camp, as well, at a 200-acre facility in McHenry County. More than 200 school-aged children of employees participate.

"Both my kids went through the camp," says Weinberg. "It's really pretty fun." The children come to work with their parents and leave for camp on a company bus.

"We don't think of ourselves as being generous or charitable to our employees," Weinberg explains. "We think of it as good business as well as being the right thing to do. The reason is obvious. We build a sense of loyalty among our employees."

The reason is also well-documented. A 1983 study of Fel-Pro by University of Chicago researchers shows that workers who take advantage of the benefits have the highest performance

*Fel-Pro, Inc., Skokie*



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*Fel-Pro, Inc., Skokie*

evaluations and the lowest intentions of leaving Fel-Pro. In addition, few of these workers have ever needed to face disciplinary action.

"Working at Fel-Pro and their benefits is the best thing that ever happened to me," one 20-year factory employee told the researchers. "As a result, I have complete concern for and loyalty to the company."

The study also shows that the more often workers use Fel-Pro's benefits, the more they support and participate in quality improvement changes taking place within the company. What's more, workers appreciate the benefits even if they use them infrequently.

"Benefits are in some ways like 'money in the bank,'" a 5-year employee explained. "You don't have to use them to make you feel good. Just knowing they're there gives you a secure feeling."

Interestingly, the study also notes that two-thirds of the employees preferred the benefits over more profit-sharing.

The cost of this kind of work and family benefits package is more affordable than some might expect. For Fel-Pro—a family-owned, privately held company that has about 2,700 employees and does about $400 million in business annually—the benefits package costs about $700 per employee each year.

"We feel that these benefits give us a competitive edge," Weinberg says. "We have 2,000 employees who are thinking about how they can make their jobs better. We have 2,000 people anxious to work hard because they feel connected and fully invested in the company. Sure, there's a cost associated with tutoring and day care and the camp, but in our minds the benefits outweigh that cost."

Weinberg and Co-Chairman Emeritus Elliot Lehman spend a lot of time repeating that point—how the benefits outweigh the costs—in speeches and articles to other business owners.

Increasingly, companies are recognizing the importance of family-friendly policies. From 1982 to 1990, the number of employers with some sort of child care program increased from 600 to 5,600 nationally. However, great improvement is still needed. As of 1993 only 13 percent of Fortune 1000 companies provided emergency child care services.

"We owe it to those who work for us to help them solve the problem of working for a living while raising a family," Lehman noted in a Parade magazine article earlier this year. "The well-being of our children determines the well-being of our country."

*For more information, contact: David Weinberg and Elliot Lehman, Fel-Pro, Incorporated, 7450 N. McCormack Blvd., Skokie, IL 60076, (708) 674-7500.*



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# To Invigorate Our Communities

## REBUILDING FROM THE GROUND UP

By Susan Frankel Perlin

At first glance at the intersection of 39th Street and South Michigan Avenue in Chicago reveals a picture of dilapidated buildings, vacant lots and the gradual deterioration of a once vibrant community. A more thorough survey of the landscape in this neighborhood called Grand Boulevard, leads to the discovery of the Elliott Donnelley Youth Center Art Park. Elaborately designed totem poles, newly restored murals, handmade benches and brightly colored playground equipment—each created by local artists and youth—exemplify the deep layer of vitality, commitment and energy which reverberates throughout this community.

According to Maurice Swanson, director of Chicago Youth Centers, Elliott Donnelley Youth Center, the Art Park symbolizes both the transformation of Grand Boulevard into a revitalized area of culture and history, and the ability to use art as a tool for sculpting a work of beauty from anything—vacant lot, abandoned building or reckless street. The significance of this project represents an ideal backdrop for a community committed to change through local engagement, resident participation and institutionalized reform.

The Grand Boulevard community extends from Pershing Road on the north to 51st street on the south, Cottage Grove Avenue on the east and the Metra tracks near the Dan Ryan Expressway on the west. Once characterized as the center of Bronzeville, Grand Boulevard was home to some of the most important retail and entertainment industries for black Chicagoans. The historical sites and elegant homes that remain serve as a testament to the community's regal past and a stark contrast to what the community has become.

Poverty, unemployment, poor housing conditions, crime, violence and an overall sense of hopelessness hover over Grand Boulevard. While renowned for famous writers and musicians during its heyday, this community is now better known for some of Chicago's most notorious public housing projects—the Robert Taylor Homes, the Ida B. Wells, the Robert Taylor Homes and Stateway Gardens. A daily struggle to survive impoverished conditions confronts the majority of Grand Boulevard's residents, yet, embedded within the community is a richness of community capacity and a deep resilience from adversity.

*The Elliott Donnelly Youth Center Art Park, Chicago*

With more than 15 separate initiatives—including the Mid-South Planning and Development Corporation's Strategic Plan, the Empowerment Zone, the Greater Grand Boulevard Youth Consortium, the Child, Youth and Families Initiative, the Governor's Task Force on Human Services Reform and the Well's Community Initiative—collaboration and community engagement are strategies being put to the test throughout Grand Boulevard. Results from this hard work include: extensive community involvement with school reform and school funding; economic development and community beautification projects; and the creation of several collaborative programs focused on youth—the Sports Project, Youth Net Center and the Arts Collaborative. Rejuvenating a community such as this, however, requires more than just the determination and energy being demonstrated by the community leaders and service providers



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leading the charge. Internal goal setting and drive combined with external guidance and support lay the foundation for rebuilding the community. Sokoni Karanja, executive director of Centers for New Horizons, credits some of the success of local efforts to the community's approach to collaboration—developing an overall plan that involves people from every walk of life in the community rather than working to reform block by block.

"There is a deeply held belief on the part of many people that Grand Boulevard can be transformed," Karanja says.

Translating this belief into reality is the challenge at hand.

"It has taken 10-15 years to develop the necessary infrastructure for effective collaboration," says Steve Redfield, Executive Director of SERIVE (Support and Training Result in Valuable Employees). This component—commitment over the long haul—is perhaps one key to success. With an infrastructure in place, the strength and potential of Grand Boulevard's community groups can begin to be realized.

Ingrained within Grand Boulevard's change effort is a devotion to securing the survival of this community's children. "Grand Boulevard is no different than other communities attempting reform. It is the realization and fear that our children might not move forward toward productive adulthood that is driving the collaborative process," says Marrice Coverson.

Although many positive outcomes can be attributed to Grand Boulevard's commitment to community collaboration and engagement, its leaders acknowledge the barriers and shortcomings which are inhibiting full implementation of this strategy. Community leaders, service providers and the greater Chicago area have embraced this change effort. Community residents—particularly the local residents—have yet to be brought completely into the fold.

Engaging resident participation has presented the greatest challenge. Gwen Talley, Executive Director of the Greater Grand Boulevard Youth Consortium, observes that apathy and loss of hope reign supreme among Grand Boulevard's most impoverished residents. Organizations and leaders working toward reform must deliver a visible change and demonstrate viable opportunities for making a difference.

Karanja adds that a limited leadership pool from within the community, coupled with the absence of community organizers working to engage residents in the process, perpetuates this significant gap in community involvement. He, too, believes that once the community begins to see the changes—rehabbed housing, school reform and programs that are working to meet their needs—residents will begin to embrace the transformation of Grand Boulevard. It is important to celebrate every success along the way, regardless of size, so that the spirit and commitment of the community remain strong.

While resources are flowing into Grand Boulevard, there remains a dearth in several service areas. Without adequate mental health services, sufficient child care, quality education and employment opportunities there is a limit to the level of reform that can be achieved. Categorical funding presents a challenge when a community is seeking a holistic approach to helping itself.

A final challenge to this strategy is ensuring that the intended recipients of the change effort reap the rewards. As the housing stock improves and resources in the community increase, leaders fear gentrification. Revitalizing Grand Boulevard is not intended to dislocate the residents who live there now.

Despite these barriers, the excitement and community spirit in Grand Boulevard is electric. Each step forward and each obstacle overcome means greater opportunities for children and families.

*For more information: Sokoni Karanja, Centers for New Horizons, (312)373-5700; Marrice Coverson, Director, Chicago Youth Centers, Elliott Donnelley Youth Center, (312)268-3815; Steve Redfield, Executive Director, SERIVE, (312)624-9700; Gwen Talley, Executive Director, Greater Grand Boulevard Youth Consortium (312)538-7116.*



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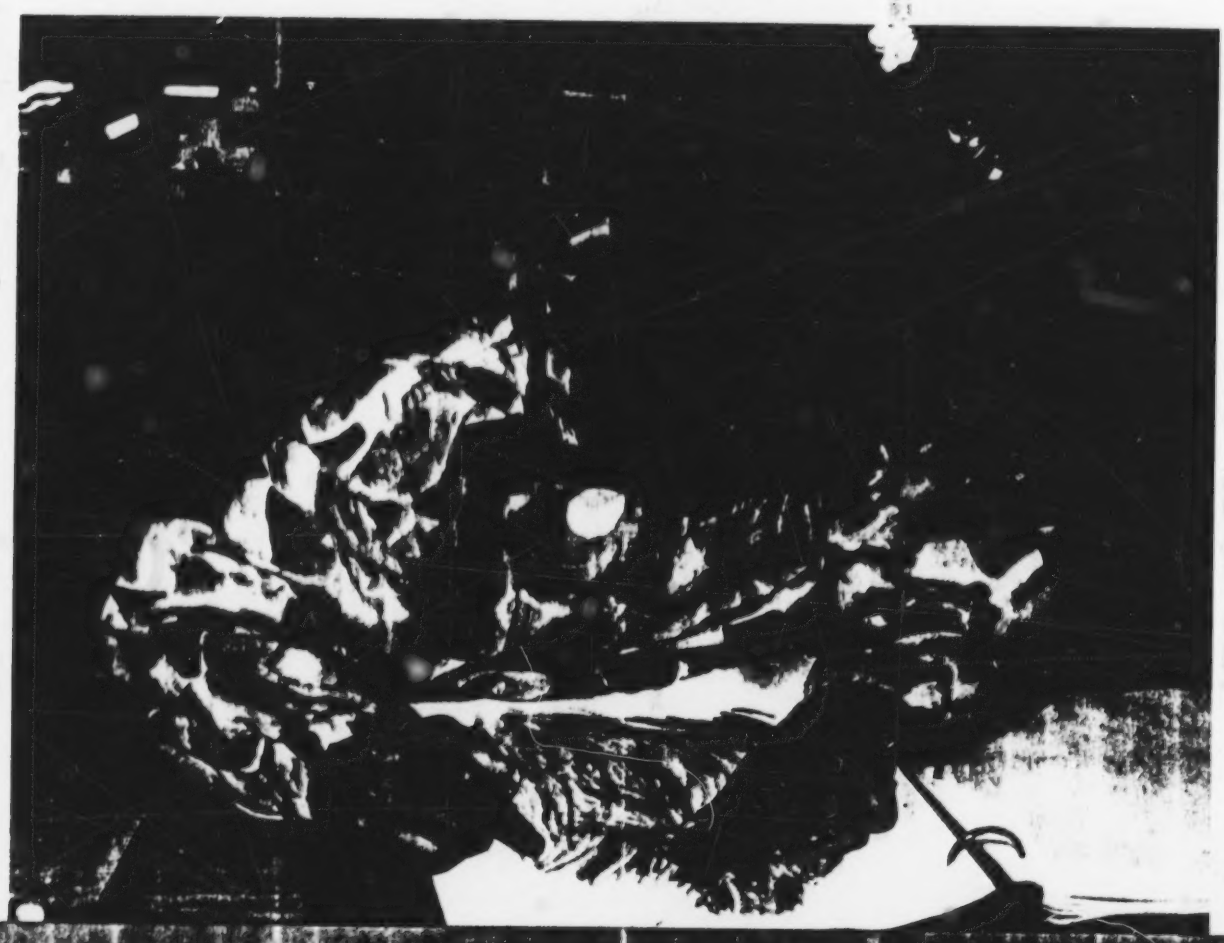
# Designing the Blueprint





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To build the future we must have a clear sense of our goal: healthy, well-educated children growing up in nurturing families and living in stable communities. In addition, we must understand how each of us can work to achieve that goal.

On June 30th, 1995, Voices for Illinois Children gathered a group of six experts to discuss how to achieve our goal. We asked the panelists to discuss strategies—to design a broad blueprint for improving the health, education, economic support and special needs of children and families. We asked them to consider the nature of the problems our families face and to address the role of the federal and state government, the local community, religious institutions and individuals in helping our children succeed.

The panelists included:

- **Barbara Bowman:** President of the Erikson Institute.
- **Reverend Stanley L. Davis:** Executive Director of the Chicago and Northern Illinois Region of the National Conference of Christians and Jews.
- **Arden Handler:** Associate Professor of community health sciences at the University of Illinois, School of Public Health, Maternal and Child Health Training Program.
- **Karen McCurdy:** Principal analyst for the National Center on Child Abuse Prevention Research, a program of the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse.
- **Beverly J. "B.J." Walker:** Assistant to Governor Jim Edgar for Human Services Reform.
- **Bob Wolters:** Vice President and General Manager of business network sales for AT&T.

The discussion was moderated by **Jack Doppelt,** Associate Dean and Associate Professor at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University.

*Breaking Ground (from left) Bob Wolters, Karen McCurdy, B.J. Walker, Jack Doppelt, Stan Davis, Barbara Bowman and Arden Handler.*

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# Designing the Blueprint: Discussion Summary

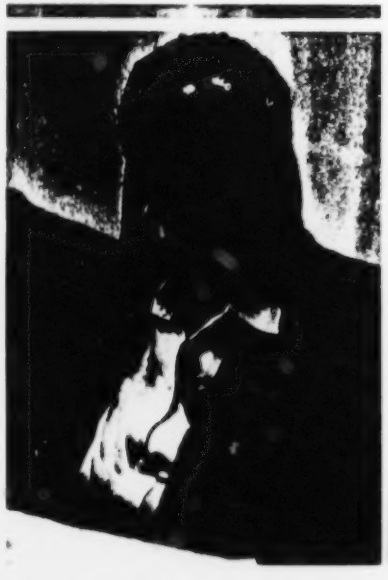
The panel clearly articulated how important it is to identify and develop strategies that work to help children and families. Here is a summary of their insight and suggestions in several key areas.

- **Invest in Children:** Unlike some European and Asian countries, the United States does not make early investments in children. These investments can prevent some of the costly problems that a growing number of our children face. Some issues take years to solve. Some programs take years to fully develop. Investing in children means focusing on prevention and standing behind and working towards solutions over longer periods of time.
- **Coordinate Services:** The current service system is fragmented and disjointed. A coordinated service strategy recognizes that problems do not happen in isolation and can be more effectively prevented and treated with a coordinated and comprehensive strategy.
- **Support Economic Security:** The well-being of a family and the community hinges on economic security. The education system and corporations need to help current and future workers prepare for tomorrow's workplace. Families need bridges from welfare to work to make work a viable and promising alternative to welfare dependence. Communities need strong economic bases to stand on their own and to provide citizens with the services they require.
- **Support Children and Parents:** Strategies and policies designed to better the lives of children should include ways to strengthen and support parents. Problems that children or parents face have an impact on the whole family. Considering the whole family unit, whenever possible, helps to ensure that issues of child well-being are fully addressed and resolved.
- **Promote Government-Community Partnerships:** Too often, programs are created at the national or state level and sent down into communities without any real consideration of local issues. A particularly effective strategy encourages state and federal government to work in partnership with local communities. The federal and state governments need to provide the general structure, guidelines and resources for programs. The local community needs to be involved in decision making about program design and implementation.
- **Get Involved:** Everyone has a role to play. Today's children face tremendous problems. We all have a stake in improving child well-being. We—government, communities, religious institutions, business and local citizens—all play a role in supporting children and families. We should recognize our collective responsibility for one another and act accordingly.
- **Build on Success:** There are many strategies that have been shown to be effective in preventing and mitigating the problems that children and families face. We need to overcome the belief that "nothing works."

The following is an edited transcript from the two-hour panel discussion, which was held at Amoco Corporation headquarters in Chicago.

**Jack Doppelt**—What realizations do you have today about societal conditions that you would not have had two or three years ago? What is truly different in what you have observed? Bob, we will start with you.

**Bob Wolters**—In the past two or three years I have spent some time traveling overseas, particularly in Asia. I have been struck by how much more conscious other countries in the world are about the necessity to devote more resources to children in the very early years. Even resource poor countries have this awareness.



***"We must build scaffolds under these communities' abilities to develop themselves."***

**B.J. Walker**

**B.J. Walker**—What I have seen is that people have moved out of the communities. A community like Grand Boulevard in Chicago in the 1960s was equally segregated as it is today, but 77 percent or so of the males 14 and over were working. Today, it is something like 34 percent. The traditional ways in which communities were able to develop culture have eroded and government has not done any better nor any worse in supporting those communities. The communities themselves no longer have adequate resources for development. So if we are going to change how we view human services, we must build scaffolds under these communities' abilities to develop themselves.

**Stan Davis**—What I am hearing increasingly from religious leaders in impoverished communities is the number of funerals that are being held each week of younger and younger children—3 to 5 per congregation a week of young people who have been blown away by violence, not by physical illness. I think, secondly, there is an increase in class separation. Poorer people are having fewer and fewer contacts with folks that are middle or lower middle class. The lines of economic delineation seem to be getting much more concentrated. Thirdly, as a result there is an over-arching sense of hopelessness. Where will the next job come from? How will I get training? I can't go and work in the steel mill like somebody did 30 years ago and expect to end up with a $15 or $20 an hour job. Those jobs don't exist anymore. How can you function with a minimum wage salary, with no benefits, and expect to live a normal life in this society? That level of hopelessness is coupled with an over-arching sense of fear: a fear for one's physical

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safety, a fear for one's economic well-being, and a general sense of desperation, that nothing is really going to change. I also think the pervasiveness of drugs is an issue that we all have to address. Most law enforcement people will say 65 to 80 percent of all violent acts or felonies are somehow tied to drugs. That's an issue that we all sort of dance around and play with in this society and don't really address at all.

**Karen McCurdy**—From my perspective it seems that in the past couple of years there has been a more punitive approach being taken towards young children in terms of harsher sentencing, sentencing children for longer terms, treating them like adults. If they do anything wrong they are not given a second chance. Alternatives are not thought about. We are channeling our kids who are at greatest risk into paths that leave them with no future. Another part of it seems that kids today, at least in the inner-city, are really growing up in a war zone. It is hard for the rest of us to have a concept of what that really means—to live in a building where you can't go from one floor to the next because it might be controlled by a different gang. Parents who are trying to do the best for their children are concerned about making sure that they're safe and that involves keeping the children in the home and not going anywhere. Well, they are ensuring their child's survival, but in terms of stimulation and growth and excelling in an educational system, they are pretty much guaranteeing failure.

**Jack Doppelt**—I am detecting two general world views. One is that our own societal economic self-interest ought to dictate that we should be much more engaged, committed to our kids. The competing world view seems to be that we have been pouring money down efforts to do just that over a number of years and that we are tired of pouring this money down. Therefore, we abandon a certain segment of kids, if not all kids.

**Barbara Bowman**—I have a great deal of trouble with the "throwing money" argument. Winnetka throws money at education. They pay $7,000 per child per year in the lower grades. They are very successful at "throwing money" at education. We always talk about how the community action agencies "failed." The community action agencies were enormously successful. Child health improved in the 1960s and '70s more than it had improved in the prior period and it has decreased since we have stopped being that supportive of these efforts. So I don't buy the proposition that we have been throwing money at problems.

**Jack Doppelt**—But you clearly recognize that other people do.

**Barbara Bowman**—True.

**Jack Doppelt**—Many people do. Maybe even the majority do at this point.

**Barbara Bowman**—And it is a quality of self-delusion that I find very interesting. There was an article in the newspaper quite recently about what older citizens believe about the Social Security system. They believe we spend more on foreign aid than we spend on helping the senior citizens in this country. They believe that we spend more on Medicaid than on Medicare. They believe that they put all the money into the social security system that they get back. Now, you know that is not true. So, why do we persist in believing it?

**Bob Wolters**—I think part of the problem is that we live in a society that is very dependent on instant gratification. I grouse when my coffee takes two minutes in the microwave. We have instant gratification, via television, via media, via the internet. So we have very little patience for long-term investment and seeing a payback on that investment. In the '60s, '70s, but especially in the '80s, as large American corporations were going through extensive downsizing, one of the early victims was education inside corporations. They stopped educating their employees. My own company went through a period of that and it took a while to figure that out. The companies, large corporations who can especially sustain in-house education, can provide you data and statistics on what educating their employees means for them in productivity, in their ability to be competitive, and in product quality. I want to come back to a point that really struck me. Someone referenced before the desperation and lack of hope. The gap between education and job opportunity is far greater than many people perceive. Factory jobs are going away. If this was a rural economy in the 19th century and a manufacturing economy in the last several years of the 20th century, it will be a service and information economy, at least for the United States, in the 21st century. You can't have a high school education and get many of the jobs that people are going to have to compete for globally tomorrow. The gap is far greater than people realize because manufacturing will represent by the end of this century certainly less than 20 percent of the jobs in the United States—maybe even as low as 10 percent.

***"We have very little patience for long-term investment and seeing a payback on that investment."***

**Bob Wolters**

**Jack Doppelt**—Help me get specific. Tell me about some effective strategies and programs.

**B.J. Walker**— All of us need to own the same goal. I think programs are only as effective as those people who are in place to operate them and the will that is in place to have them really used. Barbara Sizemore did some work in schools that were sitting dead bottom in the Pittsburgh school district. In several years time, several of those dead bottom schools were sitting near the top like number 2, number 3, number 4 in achievement. She worked with those schools around what the goal was, which was to bring the scores up. They did a number of things, but the one thing that is critical is that the community was brought into the process to own the target for the goal. I think when you look at this issue of throwing money at education, the reason why throwing money at education in Winnetka works is because the community there asks for some serious accountability about the money that is thrown and they are political participants in the system that opens or closes the doors to that money. Poor people are not participatory in the political system and as a result of that they don't have a lot of say about whether doors are going to be opened or closed. So the issue of program utilization is really an issue of community mobilization around the politics of using programs. Good programs in and of themselves are not very useful without that kind of community ownership and without the community having the power to open the doors that need to be opened for the programs to be used. It just doesn't happen.

**Karen McCurdy**— I would like to add that the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse is involved with Healthy Families America. We try to establish private public partnerships that are community based and then try to deliver home visiting services to parents who might be at risk for child abuse and neglect. There is a program here at the Winfield Moody Health Center that I think speaks to some of the best concepts. It has been added to the Federal Healthy Start Initiative. The program is working with mothers who received prenatal services through the Healthy Start Initiative, which aimed to reduce infant mortality through home delivery of prenatal care services. The Healthy Families America component is continuing to deliver these home visits once the child is born and on an intensive level for about five years. What is unique about this program is not only are they providing home visiting, but that they have contacted other community agencies such as the New City YMCA, some therapeutic child care agencies, programs, workshops, and agencies working on substance abuse and job assistance. They are really trying to create a whole network of services for these parents that are all taking place within the community. Everybody can still find that programs in the community actually compete with each other both for clients and for dollars. They end up creating this fragmented system. Here you have a preventive system that's widespread, community based with a lot of connections. These strategies of getting in early, seeing the family intensively, and seeing them for a long period of time will actually have an impact in the long-term on a lower income.

**Arden Handler**— We have gone through this whole school reform movement. It is bad, throw out the government piece, throw out the public piece, and get the government out of our lives. Somehow we have to come up with a partnership, a creative marriage between the public sector and the community. You have to have a national commitment with outward funding and standards. You also have to allow for community participation and development in unique ways to make sure that the programs are going to meet the community's needs and are culturally sensitive. That marriage is what seems critical to me.

***"Somehow we have to come up with a partnership, a creative marriage between the public sector and the community."***

**Arden Handler**

**Stan Davis**— There is a woman in Chicago named Christine Oliver who heads an organization called Chicago Dwellings Association. It's Chicago's oldest affordable housing company. It's private, not for profit. She came up with an idea about five years ago of something called mixed income communities as a way to provide role models of those who are successful in work for people who are impoverished. The result has been legislation at the federal level that modifies some of HUD's guidelines to allow mixed income communities to be established. The first one in Chicago is called Lake Park Place—six buildings that have been such an object of contention over the last ten or fifteen years. The first two of these buildings have now been rehabilitated into something that virtually anyone of us in this room would love to live in. Twenty five percent of the people who live in these units must be working and they pay market rate for these units. Seventy five percent of the people in these units, and I think these percentages are right, are people who are on welfare. What has happened after two years is that 25-30 percent of the people who had been on welfare now have jobs. They have gone through training. They have networked with their neighbors. So you have secretaries and bus drivers and airline stewardesses living with folks who maybe never worked at a job and that are now finding them. What this does in terms of family stability, what this does in terms of an increasing sense of self worth, what this does to bring everyone to a level where you suddenly feel good about yourself is just remarkable. There is no graffiti on these buildings. There is no tearing up of these buildings whatsoever. These buildings are models. This is an example of this partnership of national policy being set and then being augmented or allowed to be experimented with to allow some innovative changes to take place, which if they work, hopefully can go systemwide.

**Barbara Bowman**— I certainly would like to comment, however, that it seems to me that the movement of programs or responsibilities into communities has been marked by a

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***"It is the perception that is causing so much trouble. We don't communicate very well with other people who don't see what we see or do what we do."***

**Barbara Bowman**

decrease in resources. So you begin to wonder whether you are being set up to fail. If we are going to decrease the resources, are we going to have the same expectations for community groups' success as we had for the bureaucracy when it had the money and had a considerable amount more of it?

**B.J. Walker**—It has to be a partnership. I don't know that I call it a set-up. It's a response that any reasonable person would make. When the resources start to decline, government steps away from the table. The idea of a partnership makes much more sense because the community has not taken up its responsibility as well as it could or should and the government has assumed that it knows much more than it does about what works and what makes sense in any community context. If we are going to do something in this period of decreasing funding, then we are going to have to figure out who knows what best and work out some solutions. I think if government will stay at the table, the community will come to the table and at some point a partnership must be forged because we do have to figure out how we are going to do more with less. That's the political reality.

**Arden Handler**—I think "declining resources" is a myth. We still are the richest country in the world. Why are we convincing ourselves that we have no money? Because we don't feel like we want to take collective responsibility for each other. We don't really want to help our neighbor anymore. We are all intertwined. If we collectively look at the situation—which we don't do—we would say that we have to increase the income tax, we have to pay more taxes, we don't need a tax cut, we need a tax increase. It would help all of us. We are still at a point where we can do things like raise income taxes, have a guaranteed minimum income and tax wealthier people on that income. There are strategies that are out there, like social insurance, that the Western Europeans have been using for the last forty years. We have totally convinced ourselves that we are resource-poor and it's just not true.

**B.J. Walker**—If you stand on the corner I don't think that the average person would tell you that they want to pay more taxes. When I say declining funding I mean tax money available to spend in these particular ways. But another issue is that, as citizens, we want to make private decisions about how our money is spent.

**Barbara Bowman**—It is the perception that is causing so much trouble. I think that those of us who are concerned about children and social welfare in the community have not done a very good job in marketing what we have to say. We don't communicate very well with other people who don't see what we see or do what we do. We ought to figure out a better marketing strategy that makes contact with people.

**Karen McCurdy**—One of the problems that I see is that we don't take a prevention view of anything in the U.S. We are more crisis-oriented. Our programs are established to address a problem that already exists. We don't learn from other Western cultures of how useful prevention is. We can't sit and wait for a result that might not occur for ten years. One reason that there is a perception that social programs don't work is because programs get funded for three years as a demonstration project and right at the time that they finally have got it all together, they are out of business. We don't fund them to last long enough to be a model. This short-sighted vision and this failure to emphasize prevention with what dollars we do have contributes to our problems. It should be our goal to get the message out that prevention is a strategy that works—not only in health, but in other areas. We should be promoting that and we should also be encouraging people to not ask for results the next day. The desire to only fund new programs and to only fund them for a short period of time does a disservice to the whole field in general.

**Arden Handler**—I almost hate getting asked to evaluate programs that are going to be around for three or four years and serve 25 people. What I like are the big programs—let's say "everybody in the country is going to be born, and they are going to get registered, and they are going to have a home visit by a nurse, and if they seem to be a little bit risky three months later, then somebody else is going to come visit them." I would like to see us start to think about those kinds of big programs that are part of a national policy about how we treat women and children as opposed to thinking that this program got money from this corporation to do this intervention for three years. There are a million of those kinds of programs. We can always do those for ad infinitum, but there is a national structure, a national family policy, a child health policy, a woman's policy that we don't have in this country. Even for our state to push in that direction would be fabulous.

**Bob Wolters**—But, Arden—

**Arden Handler**—What? We are never going to get there? I know.



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**Bob Wolters**—Well, I am not sure I disagree with what you are saying, but I am struck by the reality that we are rapidly moving the other way.

**B.J. Walker**—I would challenge that we do have a national policy called education. I worry that other national policies would be equally problematic. We have seen that when you live in a poor community, when you are of color, the educational system has numerous failures—even though there is a giant educational policy called the public school system.

**Barbara Bowman**—But education isn't a national program. Education is a local program and, indeed, that's why it hasn't worked very well for poor people and for minorities. It is because they are stuck trying to get their fair share from their neighbors—not from some abstract federal government—but from people who live in the same community.

**B.J. Walker**—I agree with that somewhat. That's the funding of education.

**Barbara Bowman**—That's critical.

**B.J. Walker**—Well, the funding issue is critical—and it is not. When Barbara Sizemore improved schools from the bottom to the top in Pittsburgh, they didn't get more money. Inequity of funding is clearly a local issue. But there are other programmatic issues. There are many places you can do a good job of educating youngsters and it wouldn't matter if you gave them twice as much money because there are other issues in play about the education.

**Karen McCurdy**—The government policy should be to empower families and to move towards prevention. Not necessarily to run a large-scale program but to be the ones who are advocating the policies and funding the seed money so that the people within the communities can create programs that meet the needs of the communities. A lot of times programs get taken from this place and put over here without any thought as to what is needed over there. What we need is guidance from the top down and money—but room to actually implement it at the community level. So I see both viewpoints as melding because it doesn't have to be one or another. We should find a way to incorporate both.

**Arden Handler**—Like a marriage.

**Barbara Bowman**—Let me tell you as an old person, I love Medicare. It's a big national program and I think it's wonderful. The WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) program—big national program—it's done wonderful things. Head Start is a national program, another wonderful program. Let's not throw the baby out with the bath water. We need national programs as well as programs that are locally designed and implemented.

***"The more I am around the more I see that self-worth is so much a component of what we do."***
**Stan Davis**

**Jack Doppelt**—We have been talking about designing and implementing policies to help children. Crucial to the design of such policies is understanding what affects children. What are some primary determinants that can affect the lives of kids?

**Arden Handler**—Income support. Let's get rid of welfare and have a guaranteed income for everyone, and a minimum floor, and children's allowances. All of Western Europe does it. Support is universal and it is not stigmatized or means tested. You don't have a whole bureaucracy spending money to see if you are poor enough or rich enough to get it. You just get it.

**Barbara Bowman**—I guess if I had to focus on something I'd find myself being really surprised at my notion. But in today's world: employment development. Because I think its not even possible in today's social relief system to be unemployed and have self-respect. It seems as though it is no longer acceptable to the public for welfare mothers to stay at home with their kids. But the rest of us can make enough money and stay at home and that's our business. If we accept the realities of today, then I think that employment development is the key.

**Stan Davis**—I second that. The more I am around, the more I see that self worth is so much a component of what we do. Not working and not being productive, you just totally denigrate yourself. The only way that I see employment development working is through a mix of getting some type of education and getting job training by corporations.

**Jack Doppelt**—I am hearing things we need to do for parents versus things we need to do for kids. Which is it?

**B.J. Walker**—I don't think that you can talk about kids without talking about parents. Over and over again I watch public service systems bursting case quotas and over and over again the dollars are spent to save kids. But with none of the kids that we save are we touching the adults in their lives so that we can ensure that those kids continue to be safe. I don't think we can talk about child policy without talking about the adults.

***"I think it could be possible to set-up some kind of national service corps for older people to get involved mentoring a child. When you talk to people about what's been successful in prevention programs, it's those kind of one-on-one contacts that seem to really make a difference."***

**Karen McCurdy**

**Karen McCurdy**—I have somewhat of an opposing viewpoint. I feel like most of the policies that are supposed to be geared to children actually go to the parents—when there are services for the family, these are not services for their child. There are reasons to focus on the parents and reasons to focus on the kids. There is evidence that shows that an adult outside of the family—whoever—can make a tremendous impact on a child. We should use that kind of knowledge to better the current service delivery system, by focusing on children. Although, not to the exclusion of parents.

**B.J. Walker**—We should develop alternatives that would allow the community to continue to help take care of the child and develop his or her parents. We don't have an adequate system to take children away from their parents and guarantee that their best interests are going to be taken care of. Therefore, developing adults has to be something that we are in the business of doing, whether they are to the fullest matter or whether they are parents.

**Bob Wolters**—I wanted to come back to a point. Barbara, you made earlier about employment development. I believe that is the solution. We have to create jobs in this country. The difficulty is creating enterprise capability versus full employment. Full employment is unfortunately not going to be very realistic because we will only employ as many people as this country can competitively tolerate in the world economy. One of the difficulties that I have spoken about is the fact that it is the large corporations today that have the ability to sustain work force programs, but that's not where job creation is taking place. It's the smaller corporations and entrepreneurs who are creating the jobs, so we almost need incentives for them to improve their employees—because the way they do it today is they change their employees. They grow until they need the next level of capability. John and Mary don't have that capability or experience, so they hire someone who has that capability. We have to find incentives for them to want to educate because they do not have their own infrastructure to do that, yet it's within these small companies that the most job creation is taking place.

**Jack Doppelt**—What policies or strategies should we pursue to address these challenges to help children and families?

**Barbara Bowman**—One of the policies that came out of the "[illegible]" decision was to move families out of the city into the suburbs and, indeed, it does change the outcomes of the children.

**Karen McCurdy**—But there are two ways of looking at that. You can think, well, should we try to improve the communities that these children live in. There are a lot of small projects that take kids on "one-on-one" in mentoring relationships. I think it could be possible to set up some kind of national service corps for older people to get involved mentoring a child. When you talk to people about what's been successful in prevention programs, it's those kind of one-on-one contacts that seem to really make a difference. But, that won't address the problem that these kids are still living in this community where there are no jobs, where there is poor housing, and where their parents are having a struggle to get food. Some kids will be able to overcome it because they have had this additional investment, but it's not going to work for all kids if they remain in communities that don't support their growth.

**Jack Doppelt**—I want to get back to the perception problem. The assumption is that many people believe that programs aren't working period. How do we go about taking on that challenge?

**Bob Wolters**—The reality today is that the people who are challenging that programs have not been effective are not necessarily the people who are using the programs. People who use the programs should be encouraged to voice their opinion about the programs. But a big issue is that people who do not take advantage of these programs, because they fortunately do not need them, are not aware of their effect. They only hear about them when programs don't work. They don't get to see the bigger success of programs.

**Karen McCurdy**—And there is a lot more media attention when something doesn't work than when something does work. When you hear about a death to a child who was in protected care, that's everywhere for days. But you never hear "this" family was reunited after "these" services. That story is never covered.







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**Bob Wolters**—Let's talk about the success of the programs that have been developed. Whenever there is a tragedy, this country just opens its heart. There are situations in greater Chicago that if people knew about, they would open their hearts to. They would get behind the programs and they would support them.

**B.J. Walker**—I am almost afraid to say this. There is a conspiracy of silence in this country about what works and doesn't work. There are things that some of our community refuses to talk about. The truth is that, in some ways, there is an awful lot of reason for cynicism. Otherwise we would not have let most of the high schools in Chicago have a 60-75 percent dropout rate over all of these years. It's like "wake up America, wake up Chicago." We did not just get this dropout rate in the last three years or four years. It has been here all along. We have had a conspiracy of silence about the bad outcomes, about what works and doesn't work. I think we ought to be honest about what we are dealing with. We ought to generate conversations with people about the real deal. Communities know what is happening. I am not in a dream world of communities, but they know why things are happening and who they are working and why they are not working. If we don't pull some people to the table who will honestly talk, declining resources or not, division or not, we are not going to get ourselves to a place where we will really do something about these issues. If we don't start breaking through the conspiracy of silence, we are going to lose this battle politically. When we lose it politically we are going to lose it altogether, because the political context is dictating whether we win or whether we lose right now. A lot of these people out there would like to just beat and face the truth. If I am not right about that, then I think we are going to lose anyway.

**Stan Davis**—We are going to hear very soon from those folks that are disenfranchised.

**Barbara Bowman**—I don't know that you are going to hear right away. These people have been facing adversity for a long time. It could take a long time before we find out what a generation of too little for too many will mean. People change most through relationships. When we try to talk at people with statistics or "it's in your best interest to do this that and the other," we are not very successful. Maya Angelou said when people find out that other people eat and drink and live and die, they can begin to understand one another. It seems to me that that's the job of churches: to tell human beings what they have in common with one another, to bring them into personal contact with one another. I don't see our churches doing that. They keep pulling people farther and farther apart. So, I think you should go and organize the church community.

**Stan Davis**—In conjunction with everybody else, however. We are not going to do it in isolation.

**Arden Handler**—If we are not going to go after universal programs in place of small scale targeted demonstration programs that only serve small numbers of people, we should at least be talking about how all programs universally impact people and how what happens to your neighbor affects you. Programs that affect kids affect all of us and programs that affect poor kids affect all of us even if we think they don't.

**Stan Davis**—It seems to me that at some point we have to create a common agenda that allows us then to reach out to the various publics that we think are going to help bring about change.

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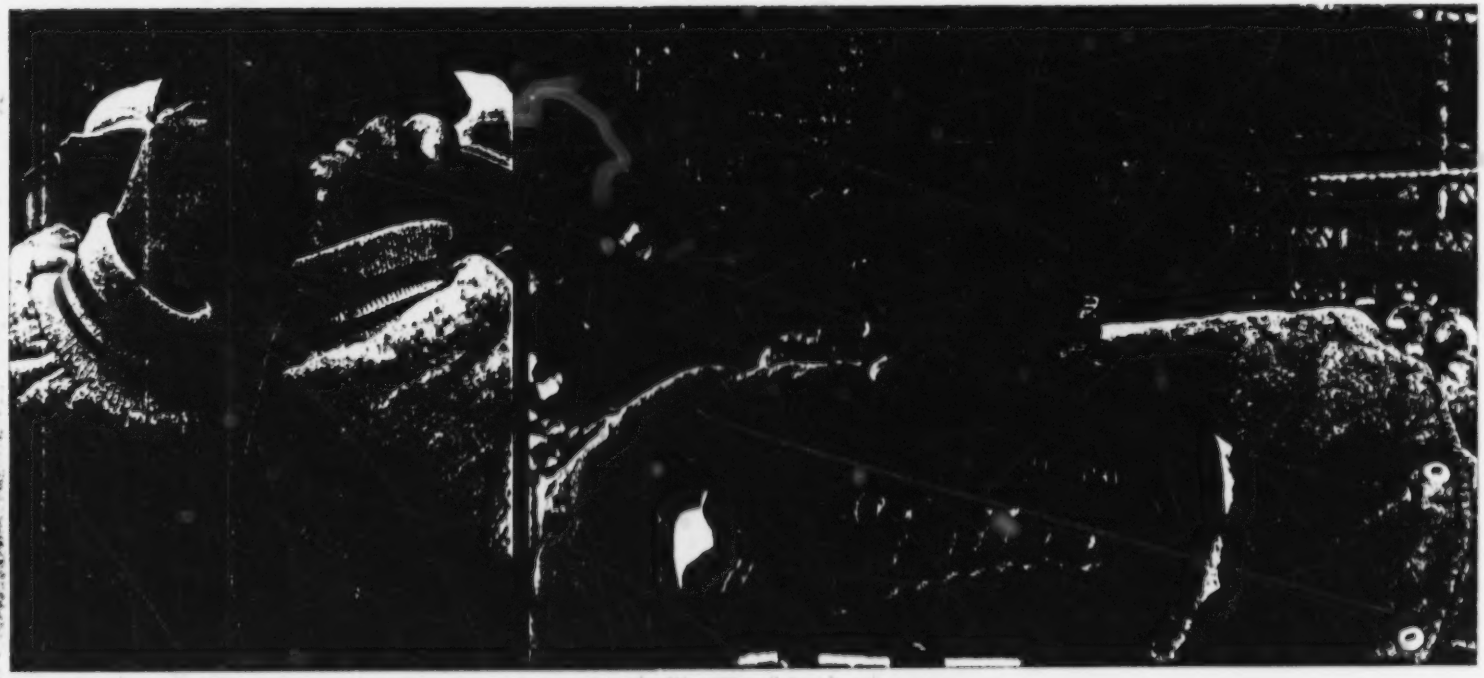
# Survey and Foundation





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In the Survey and Foundation section, we examine the challenges Illinois children face in terms of strengthening families and improving the education and health of our youngest neighbors. We also take a look at how Illinois compares to other states.

To build a better future for our children, we must understand the obstacles we face today.

## COMPARISON TO OTHER STATES

In 10 essential areas of childhood well-being measured in the 1995 National Kids Count Data Book, Illinois ranks 38th of the 50 states and Washington D.C., moving up one place from last year. However, Illinois continues to hold the lowest childhood well-being rank of its seven Midwestern neighbors. Illinois also lags behind California and New York—the two other most populous states in the union—on indicators of child well-being.

**Strengthening Families:**

Illinois has the highest per capita income of its seven Midwestern neighbors, yet Illinois has the highest percentage of children in poverty. Some 21.1 percent of children in Illinois live in extreme poverty (income below 50 percent of the poverty level). Nationwide, 8.9 percent of children live in extreme poverty.

More than 1 in 4 Illinois families with children is headed by a single parent, yet close to four of every 10 mother-headed families in Illinois receive no child support or alimony. Illinois ranks far below its Midwestern neighbors on the receipt of child support or alimony, an important ingredient to the economic survival of mother-only families. Nearly half of all families where only a mother is present in Iowa receive child support or alimony.

**Health and Safety:**

In 1992, 69.9 of every 100,000 Illinois teens (ages 15-19) died a violent death; a 34 percent increase from the Illinois teen violent death rate in 1985 (52 per 100,000). Nationally the teen violent death rate only increased 6 percent from 1985 to 1992. Of the eight Midwestern states, Missouri had the highest teen violent death rate in 1992, 84.9 per 100,000 teens.

**Education:**

Nearly 10 percent of teens (ages 16-19) in Illinois are high school dropouts, placing Illinois 32nd nationwide. Wisconsin has the lowest dropout rate in the nation—4.2 percent. Close to 11 percent of teens in Illinois are neither attending school nor working. Less than 6 percent of teens in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota are neither attending school nor working. In New York, 9 percent of teens are neither in school nor working.

## Comparison to Other States*

| | Ill. | Ind. | Iowa | Mich. | Minn. | Mo. | Ohio | Wis. | Calif. | N.Y. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Composite Ranking | 38 | 32 | 2 | 31 | 8 | 36 | 22 | 9 | 35 | 37 |
| Per Capita Income in 1993 | $22,500 | $19,200 | $18,300 | $20,500 | $21,000 | $19,500 | $19,600 | $19,800 | $21,900 | $24,800 |
| Percent of children in poverty in 1992 | 21.1 | 19.7 | 12.6 | 21.8 | 18.4 | 19.5 | 17.5 | 14.0 | 22.7 | 23.3 |
| Percent of children without health insurance | 10.0 | 10.7 | 6.8 | 7.0 | 5.4 | 12.5 | 8.2 | 7.2 | 17.1 | 9.9 |
| Percent of families with children headed by a single parent | 26.2 | 29.0 | 19.6 | 27.9 | 25.1 | 25.6 | 23.5 | 23.4 | 25.3 | 28.5 |
| Percent of mother-headed families receiving child support or alimony | 26.1 | 42.3 | 49.0 | 38.1 | 36.5 | 30.1 | 29.8 | 44.8 | 25.0 | 25.4 |
| Percent of teens who are high school dropouts ages 16-19 | 9.6 | 10.7 | 4.6 | 8.8 | 5.9 | 9.4 | 6.4 | 4.2 | 11.7 | 7.6 |
| Teen violent death rate ages 15-19 (per 100,000 teens) | 69.9 | 63.3 | 49.0 | 63.7 | 51.5 | 84.9 | 54.2 | 60.3 | 72.2 | 55.9 |

* The Annie E. Casey Foundation. "Kids Count Data Book: State Profiles of Child Well-Being." Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1995.



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## State Stats: Strengthening Families

- In 1992, 30% of Illinois children were living in families with incomes at or below 150% of poverty.[1]
- The average size of a family receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children is a mother and two children. On average these families receive welfare benefits for 2.5 years and receive about $348 a month.[2]
- Of the 47,670 children in substitute care in Illinois, 57% are living in the home of a relative, 33% are in other foster care and 11% are in group homes or institutional living arrangements.[3]
- 65% of the child support cases that have court orders for financial support received no payment from the non-custodial parent.[4]
- 1 in 6 children are living in a household where there is no adult male present.[5]

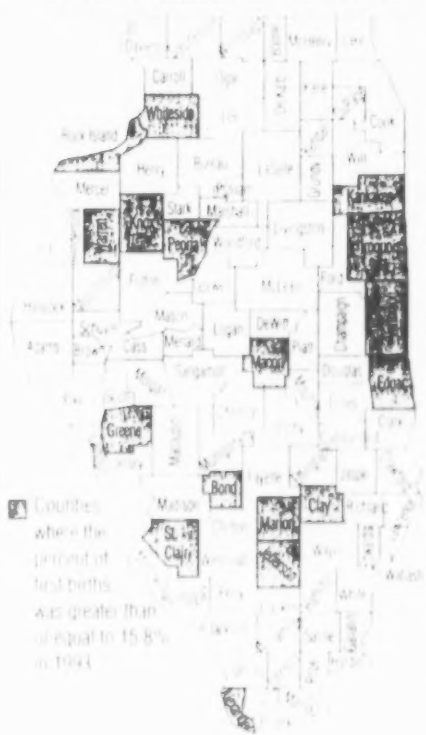
*1. Annie E. Casey Foundation. "Kids Count Data Book: State Profiles of Child Well Being." 1995. 2. Illinois Department of Public Aid, data is from FY 1994. 3. Department of Children and Family Services, data is from FY 1994. 4. Illinois Department of Public Aid, data is from FY 1994. 5. Annie E. Casey Foundation. "Kids Count Data Book: State Profiles of Child Well Being." 1995.*

# Strengthening Families

Children need strong families that can provide for their basic necessities and create a safe and loving environment. In every community there are parents who are too stressed to provide their children with the nurturing and security that protect children and prepare them for adulthood. Many factors can erode the bonds of even the strongest families—working two and three jobs to make ends meet, experiencing community violence, the lack of jobs that pay a living wage, being a single parent, and substance abuse are just a few.

It is increasingly common for families to be headed by a single parent. Between 1985 and 1992 the percent of families headed by a single parent increased 13 percent. Single parents, especially teens, usually cannot secure a job that pays enough to support the family. These families may not have access to extended family and community support which leaves a growing number of children without the emotional or financial support they need. Not having access to these and other resources threatens children's chances of becoming healthy and productive adults.

### New Families at Risk




Counties where the percent of first births was greater than or equal to 15.8% in 1993

The most overburdened families—those at risk of abuse or neglect—may have their children removed from their care. Children removed from their homes because of inadequate income, substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse and not being appropriately cared for are all too common in Illinois. There are currently more than 47,000 children in substitute care in Illinois, and this number grows every day.

All families need support. Strengthening and supporting families—improving parents' economic capacity, educating parents, reducing parental stress, reducing the cycle of violence—increases the chances that our children will live healthy, productive lives.

### NEW FAMILIES AT RISK

All families face adversity and difficult challenges. First-time parents are particularly vulnerable, for new parents may not have had the opportunity to develop a stable income, parenting skills, or support networks. An increasingly prevalent type of new family is headed by a teenaged mother who is not married and has not completed high school. These young women face the usual stress of parenthood in addition to being developing teenagers themselves who are trying to finish high school, raising a child without a partner and living under the constraints of a limited income.

Children, regardless of race, born to single parents are twice as likely to drop out of school and have a baby as their peers from two-parent families. This trend is magnified when the single parent is a teenager who has not completed high school. These parents and their children need additional support to ensure a safe and healthy development.

#### The data

- In 1993, about 1 in 8 first births in Illinois were to a teenaged, single mother who had not completed high school.
- Alexander County had the highest proportion of new families at risk—more than one-third of all first births.
- In Chicago, 4,588 children were born to a teenaged, single mother who had not completed high school.

### UNEMPLOYMENT

Families need stable, adequate financial resources to provide for their members. The employment status of parents is a key to understanding family economics. When parents don't have employment opportunities, children suffer. Additionally, because of family instability and a decrease in opportunities, some children become involved in crime, delinquency, teenaged child bearing, and educational failure.

Some unemployed persons are able to find a job and re-enter the work force in a relatively short time. However, a growing portion of unemployed people spend many months looking for work. In 1989, 15 percent of jobless people were unemployed for less than 5 weeks. Be

1993, the number of people experiencing short-term unemployment dropped to 30 percent of all unemployed. Conversely, in 1989, 5 percent of unemployed people were without work for 27-51 weeks. By 1993, that number increased to 10 percent[7].

Unfortunately, the Illinois economy is creating few high-wage jobs. Of the 193,645 expected job openings by the year 2005, most will be in sales or food service, where the median salary is below $6.50 an hour—the poverty level of a family of three. Lack of opportunity forces many parents to take jobs that don't pay an adequate wage, resulting in economic instability for their families.

The lack of adequately paying jobs is just one barrier to rejoining the work force. Others include a lack of child care, job training, and benefits. These barriers prohibit people from making the transition from welfare to work, and often force working poor parents to return to welfare.

Children need to be in families and communities that not only have a secure economic base, but also can demonstrate the benefits of work. Ensuring that families have a bridge to employment is essential to supporting and strengthening families.

**The data**

- The 1994 Illinois unemployment rate was 5.7 percent—a 5 percent drop since 1989.
- Nine counties had above a 10 percent unemployment rate in 1994. All of these counties were in the southern part of the state.
- Chicago had a 7.0 percent unemployment rate. Chicago's unemployed population accounts for 27 percent of the state's unemployed.
- Unemployment in rural counties increased 10 percent between 1989 and 1994.

## ABUSE AND NEGLECT

When families are in turmoil, children are often the victims of their parents' frustration and despair. In this environment, children are most likely to be abused or neglected.

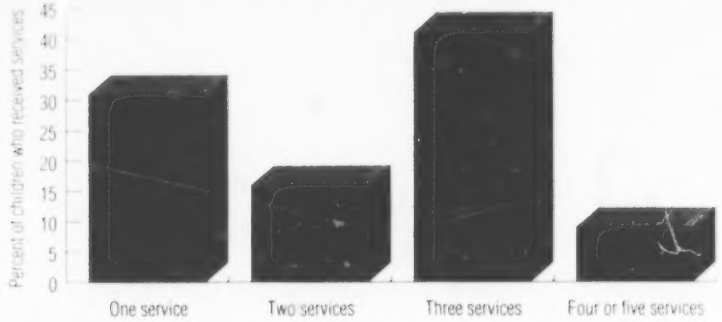
Children who are abused and neglected need the support of family and community. These children may bear the emotional as well as physical scars of abuse and neglect their whole lives. For example, children who have been sexually abused have been found to not only suffer from the immediate stress of the abuse, but also from depression, uncontrollable anger and substance abuse, among other problems, in adolescence and adulthood[8].

**The data**

- In 1994, 42,182 children in Illinois—14 victims per 1,000 children—were the victims of abuse and neglect.
- The Illinois child victim rate increased 22 percent between 1993 and 1994.
- In 1994, 70 percent of all child victims were under 9 years old.
- Scott County had the highest 1994 abuse and neglect rate—28 victims per 1,000 children.
- Chicago accounted for 25 percent of Illinois children and 46 percent of child victims.
- Rural and urban counties have very similar child victim rates, but child victims in urban areas are more likely to suffer from neglect while child victims in rural areas are more likely to suffer from other forms of abuse.



## Children Receiving Services in Illinois—FY 1995




Services include: AFDC, Medicaid, Special Education, Food Stamps and Child Welfare

## MULTI-SERVICE INDICATOR

Children come into contact with many different institutions and programs—schools, health centers, community organizations, to name a few. Children at risk—those who are experiencing educational trouble, who live in low income families or who are experiencing family stress—tend to be served by more than one of these institutions.

The patchwork of services in place to support families at risk can be confusing and difficult to negotiate. Most of the social programs designed to support families have different eligibility requirements and are run by different departments in a wide variety of offices that require different application procedures.

The current morass of social programs and services for families in need has lead many to argue that a coordinated system of service delivery would be easier for families to negotiate and better at serving the whole needs of the family. A U.S. General Accounting Office report found that comprehensive school-linked services increase the likelihood that at-risk students will stay in school[9]. In addition, a coordinated system may be easier for state and local agencies to administer.

One way to begin to understand this issue is to look at the types of services our children are likely to receive. Here we review participation in five systems including AFDC, Medicaid, Special Education, Food Stamps and child welfare.

**The data**

- 2.5 percent of children in Illinois in FY1995 received 4 or more services, up from .8 percent in FY1990.
- In FY1995, Alexander County had the highest percent of children using one or more service at 56.4 percent.
- In 14 counties, 30 percent of children used one or more services in FY1995.
- 16 percent of children in urban counties and 9 percent of children in rural counties used three or more services.

## State Stats: Education

- In each month of 1993, 7% of children missed school because they did not feel safe, and 10% brought a concealed weapon to school.[1]
- In the 1992-93 school year, almost 35,000 children dropped out of school. About 1 in 8 black and Hispanic children dropped out that year.[2]
- The average Illinois primary school class size is 26 kids per class, which is higher than any of our Midwest neighbors.[3]
- In early 1995, 60% of Illinois schools reported that they had insufficient technology to teach children.[4]
- The average weekly salary for Head Start teachers is $440. For pre-kindergarten teachers, it ranges from $651-$744. Teachers at employment-related child care centers receive $250 a week, while workers in child care homes receive $212 a week.[5]

*1. The National Education Goals Panel. "1994 National Education Goals Report"; 2. Illinois State Board of Education, 3. National Center for Education Statistics. "1990-91 School and Staffing Survey: Selected State Results." 1994; 4. U.S. General Accounting Office. "School Facilities: America's Schools Not Designed or Equipped for 21st Century." 1995; 5. Voices for Illinois Children. "Success Starts Young." 1995.*

# Education

For all children, education is key to success. Without a firm educational foundation, children are more likely to drop out of school, spend time on welfare, and end up in prison.

Early childhood programs can provide a firm educational foundation to prepare children to learn. Programs, like Head Start, have been particularly effective in preparing low-income children for school. Due to lack of availability, not all at-risk children are able to participate in quality early childhood programs.

Primary and secondary schools build on early experiences and provide children with the tools they need to succeed. Too many of our school children are not supplied with these tools. Many Illinois schools have difficulty making ends meet because they lack the resources to meet increased needs of students who may lack proper medical, academic or emotional support. Schools face additional challenges as well. Some 5.3 percent of our school children have limited proficiency in English, 33 percent live in low-income families, and 13 percent are in special education.

Children need a quality education to succeed. It is the job of parents, communities, schools and lawmakers to ensure that all our children are well-educated and prepared for the 21st century.

### PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

According to the U.S. Department of Education's goals, by the year 2000 all children should start first grade ready to learn. Early childhood education programs help prepare children for school and are particularly important for low-income and educationally disadvantaged children who often need additional assistance.

The federal Head Start program and the Illinois Children at Risk of Academic Failure program—known as the state Pre-Kindergarten program—serve low-income and other at-risk kids. These programs help thousands of children begin their educational careers on the right foot. A 1993 Illinois State Board of Education study found that 78 percent of children enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten were ranked by their teachers as average or above in terms of kindergarten readiness.[2]

#### The data

- There were 63,801 Illinois children enrolled in Head Start or state funded Pre-Kindergarten in 1994. This represents 10.4 percent of children aged 3 to 5 years.
- The number enrolled in these programs increased 2.8 percent between 1993 and 1994. This was about 1/2 of the increase experienced the previous year.
- In 19 counties at least 1 in 4 children were served by a Head Start or state funded Pre-Kindergarten program.
- In Pulaski County, one of the state's poorest counties, 81.2 percent of children aged 3 to 5 years were served by either Head Start or Pre-Kindergarten.
- In Chicago, 1 in every 3 Pre-Kindergarten children have limited proficiency in English.

### STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

While the world around schools is changing, the world within schools is also changing.

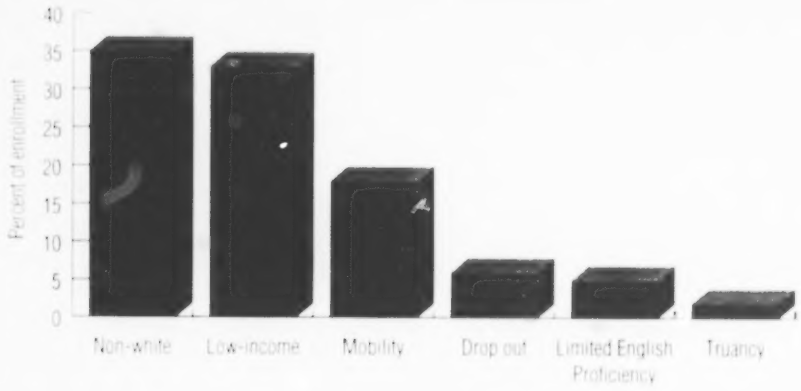
More and more school children come from homes where languages other than English, including Russian, Polish, Spanish and French, are spoken. Illinois students increasingly are from low-income or unstable homes. These characteristics often affect student performance. A study of New York City schools found that high mobility rates—children moving from one school to another during the school year—were associated with low school performance on school outcome measures.[3]

Student characteristics often determine the types of programs schools need to offer. To help children succeed and develop into well-educated adults, schools must be aware of and sensitive to the wide variety of student needs. Ignoring these special needs may cause greater problems later as needy children face a potential future of joblessness and economic insecurity.[4]

#### The data

- In the 1993-94 school year about 1 in 3 children enrolled in Illinois public schools were from low-income families.
- 18 counties had a drop out rate of more than 5.9 percent.
- The average county had a student mobility rate of 15.5 percent.
- In the 1993-94 school year students in Alexander County faced tremendous adversity—74.1 percent were low-income, there was a 22 percent mobility rate and an 8 percent truancy rate.
- While 56 percent of all Illinois school children live in Cook, DuPage, Lake and Kane counties, those counties account for 95 percent of all school children who have limited proficiency in English.

## Student Characteristics—1993-94 School Year




### PER-PUPIL REVENUES IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The single largest public investment in children is made through primary and secondary education.

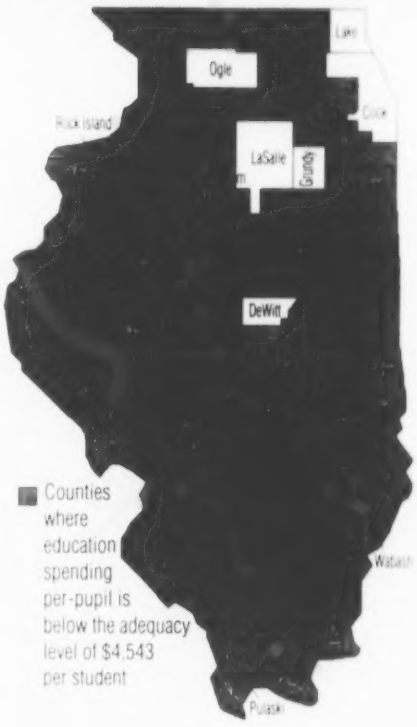
Illinois schools are funded by a combination of federal, state and local resources. The state's portion of funding has continued to erode, forcing local property tax receipts to make up a larger and larger proportion of funding. Between 1975 and 1994 the proportion of funding that comes from the state dropped from 49 percent in 1975 to 32 percent in 1994[1].

Reliance on local sources of revenue means that some schools are able to have higher per-pupil spending than others. For example, in LaSalle County, Seneca District has revenues of $11,659 per student while Allen Township District has revenues of $3,547 per student. This disparity will persist as long as statewide sources account for a limited portion of the costs of educating our children.

While few suggest that money is the only factor in creating good education, no one can contest that what the money buys can make a difference in the education of kids. The additional revenues that some schools can access allows them to create environments where more children have the opportunity to succeed.

One of the best examples of what additional resources can buy is technology. In order to be ready to participate in the work force of the 21st century, children must be exposed to and trained using computers and other technology. According to a recent U.S. General Accounting Office report, in Illinois there is an average of 19 students per computer compared to 15 students per computer nationally[2]. However, this average masks the reality that in some neighborhoods there are no computers—for students, instructors, or administrators.

## Education Spending




### The data

- In the 1993-1994 school year, the Illinois per-pupil revenue level was $4,845.
- The 10 counties with the highest average revenues per student are in the northern part of the state.
- Putnam County has the lowest average revenues at $3,109 per student.
- DuPage County has the highest average revenues at $5,841 per student.

74

75

## State Stats: Health

- In Illinois, in any given month, 40% of secondary school students have used alcohol, 25% have smoked cigarettes and 15% have used an illicit drug such as marijuana, crack, cocaine or heroin.
- While kids make up about 43% of the Medicaid population, they account for approximately 14% of the costs.[2]
- Only about 1 in 6 children who are eligible for early intervention services have access to them.[3]
- One in 10 children in Illinois is neither covered by Medicaid, nor by their parents' insurance.[4]

*1. Department of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, "Substance Use Surveys, 1993 Report", 2. Illinois Department of Public Aid, data for FY 1994, 3. Illinois Department of Public Health, "A Study of the Feasibility of Establishing a Health Insurance Plan for Children," 1992, 4. Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Kids Count Data Book: State Profiles of Child Well-Being," 1995.*

# Health

Every child in Illinois needs access to quality health care. Health care for children begins with preventive measures such as pre-natal care, immunizations, and regular check-ups. While most Illinois children have access to quality health services, some do not. Almost 393,000 Illinois children have no health insurance and many more are not able to access health care because of physical, administrative and financial barriers.

Rural parts of Illinois have difficulty attracting physicians, leaving families with little or no health care options. Working families often have financial barriers to health care because their insurance plans do not cover all family members or all medical procedures. Indeed, some health insurance packages do not even cover basic preventive medicine such as immunizations.

Minority communities are especially hard hit by barriers to access. In Illinois, 27 percent of Hispanics, and 24 percent of blacks do not have health insurance, compared to 6 percent of whites.[1] Nationally, only 35 percent of Hispanic children and 20 percent of black children have had adequate immunizations by the time they are 2 years old.[2]

Investing in good health not only improves lives but saves money. Studies have shown that every $1 invested in pre-natal services saves about $3 in medical expenses for newborns.[3]

### PRE-NATAL CARE

Quality pre-natal care is effective in reducing the incidence of low birthweight infants and infant mortality. The top three causes of preventable low birthweight are cigarette smoking, low maternal weight gain, and insufficient pre-pregnancy weight. Children who are born at a low birthweight often need extensive and expensive medical treatments as well as additional social and educational services. Teen mothers are particularly at risk of having low birthweight children. Mothers under age 15 are two times more likely to have a low birthweight child as mothers aged 15 to 19 years.[4] Many causes of low birthweight can be addressed through quality pre-natal services.

Quality pre-natal care usually consists of medical, nutritional and educational services for mothers. These services are especially important for a baby's and mother's health, and for the development of parenting skills.

**The data**

- Although 1 in 5 Illinois children born in 1993 did not receive adequate pre-natal care, this represents a 7 percent increase in the use of pre-natal care over the previous decade.
- Pratt Counties had the largest increase in the use of pre-natal care—60.8 percent between 1983 and 1993.
- 21 counties experienced a decrease in the use of adequate pre-natal care between 1983 and 1993.

### INFANT MORTALITY

Infant mortality continues to be a tragedy in Illinois. In 1992, Illinois ranked 44th among the states for its infant mortality rate.[1]

The major causes of infant mortality are low birthweight, and congenative anomalies. This year, 3,706 children were born substance-exposed, which is a growing factor in the Illinois infant mortality rate.

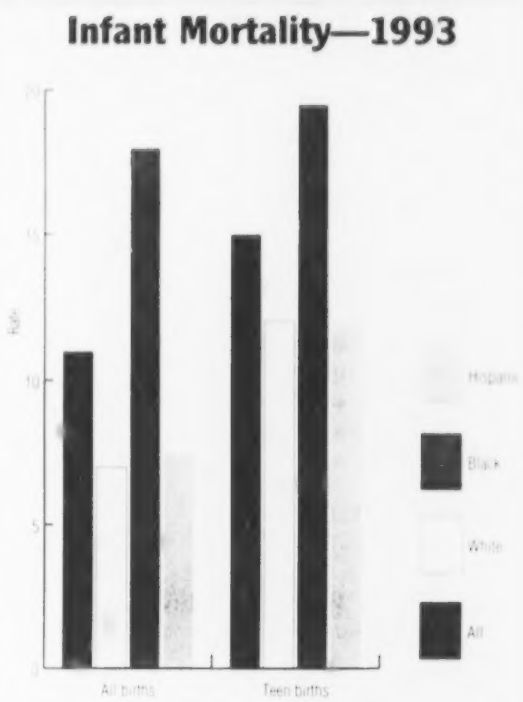
Infant mortality reduction activities, usually focused on keeping medically fragile infants alive, have been effective in reducing infant mortality rates. However, the social and financial costs of caring for these medically fragile children continues to be enormous. The average cost to keep a baby in a neonatal intensive care unit is $3,508 per day.[2] Preventing the factors which threaten the lives of these infants—through quality pre-natal care and support of at-risk families—needs to be actively addressed.

**The data**

- In Illinois in 1993, there were 9.6 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.
- Although, the 1989-1993 Illinois infant mortality rate was 10.6 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, this represents a 9.2 percent improvement over the rate from the previous five years.

## Lack of Pre-Natal Care

- 19 counties had an infant mortality rate of 12 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in the 1989-1993 period.
- Rural counties had an infant mortality rate of 8 infant deaths per 1,000 live births and urban counties had a rate of 11 per 1,000.
- In Chicago, the 1993 infant mortality rate for whites was 7.8 deaths per 1,000 live births, 20.4 for blacks, and 7.4 for Hispanics.




## LEAD POISONING

Exposure to high levels of lead can permanently damage young children. Lead poisoning, usually contracted through breathing lead contaminated dust, eating lead-based paint, or exposure through car emissions, soil, water or food, damages the brain or central nervous system and can cause coma, mental retardation, convulsions, and even death[77].

Efforts to eliminate lead hazards for kids have focused on removal of lead from schools and older homes. In Illinois, there are approximately 1.3 million homes that were built before 1940[78]. Unfortunately, the presence of lead in the home is not usually discovered until a family member has already become ill from exposure.

The level of lead in the blood is measured by micrograms per deciliter of blood—µg/dL. The Centers for Disease Control recommends that children with lead in the blood at or exceeding 15 µg/dL be provided follow-up services including medical treatment and case management[79].

### The data

- In 1994, 17,611 children under 7 years of age in Illinois were found to have a lead level at or above 15 µg/dL. This represents a rate of 146 lead poisoning cases per 10,000 children under 7 years.
- In 1994, 18 percent of all children under 7 years of age were tested for lead poisoning. However, this masks the wide variation among the counties—30 percent of children in St Clair County, 16 percent of children in Cook County, and 6 percent of children in Lake County were tested in 1994.
- Of children found to have lead poisoning, 55 percent had a lead level of 15 to 19 µg/dL, and 43 percent had a level of 20 to 44 µg/dL.
- In urban counties 9 percent of children tested had a lead level of 15 µg/dL or greater, compared to 3 percent of those tested in rural counties.
- In Chicago, 113 per 1,000 children tested had a lead level of 15 µg/dL or greater.

## CHILD DEATH

Too many Illinois children do not get the chance to grow up, due to disease and violence.

While many child deaths are due to health related causes, a large number of children die each year due to injury and violence. Violence in our homes and communities has residents across the state concerned for their safety. According to the National Youth Survey, 21 percent of adolescents engage in at least one serious violent act by age 18 and about 5 percent engage in multiple violent acts.

Young people are more likely to die from violence than adults. Of all people in Illinois under 25 who died in 1993, 26 percent were the result of homicide. Of all people over 25 who died in 1993, less than 1 percent were the result of homicide[80].

### The data

- Between 1990 and 1993, 5,789 Illinois children aged 1 to 19 died. Some 63.0 percent of these deaths were violent deaths—accidents, homicides or suicides.
- Of violent deaths among Illinois youths, 1 in 3 were gun-related. The same proportion of youth died in motor vehicle accidents between 1990 and 1993.
- One-half of violent deaths experienced by children ages 15-19 were gun related.
- In 24 counties, 63 percent or more of youth deaths were due to violence.

# Endnotes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19 This report comes from the Department of Children and Family Services.

20 March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation.

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22 U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1990 Census. *Summary Tape File 3*.

23 Illinois Department of Public Health. "Illinois Childhood Lead Poisoning Surveillance Report 1993: Are We Lead Out." June 1994.

24 Illinois Department of Public Health.

New Families at Risk—1983-1993

| | 1983 | | | 1993 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 71,593 | 8,310 | 11.6% | 74,527 | 9,618 | 12.9% | 11.2% |

Illinois County Labor Force Unemployment Number and Rate

| | 1989 | | 1994 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 358,709 | 6.0% | 339,791 | 5.7% | -5.0% |

Abuse and Neglect Fiscal 1994[1]

| | | | | of | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4,773 | 11.3% | 18,000 | 42.7% | 19,409 | 46.0% | 42,182 | 14 |

**New Families at Risk—1983-1993 [1]**

| | 1983 | | | 1993 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | At Service | Families at risk | Percent | At Service | Families at risk | Percent | Change in rate |
| [illegible] | 200 | 15 | 7.5% | 148 | 17 | 11.5% | 53.3% |
| [illegible] | 260 | 15 | 5.8% | 176 | 22 | 12.4% | 113.5% |
| [illegible] | 156 | 10 | 6.4% | 149 | 20 | 13.4% | 112.7% |
| [illegible] | 231 | 30 | 13.2% | 667 | 112 | 16.8% | 50.0% |
| [illegible] | 54 | 12 | 8.2% | 214 | 28 | 13.1% | 59.8% |
| [illegible] | 1,364 | 141 | 10.3% | 1,436 | 209 | 14.6% | 41.7% |
| [illegible] | [illegible] | [illegible] | [illegible] | [illegible] | [illegible] | [illegible] | [illegible]

Multi-Service Indicator (Participation in AFDC, Medicaid, food stamps, foster care, special education)

| | 1990 | | | | 1995 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 830,103 | 25.2% | 420,164 | 12.8% | 927,440 | 27.3% | 475,177 | 14.0% | 9.8% | 8.5% |



86

87

Multi-Service Indicator (Participation in AFDC, Medicaid, food stamps, foster care, special education)

| | 1990 | | | | 1995 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Children ages | % of children ages | Children ages 3 or more services | % of children ages 3 or more services | Children ages | % of children ages | Children ages 3 or more services | % of children ages 3 or more services | Percent change in percent of children ages 3 or more services 1990-95 | Percent change in percent of children ages 0-5 who were 1990-95 |
| | 1,611 | 18.8% | 402 | 4.7% | 1,993 | 16.8% | 483 | 4.8% | 13% | 10.4% |
| | 2,171 | 20.3% | 652 | 6.1% | 2,248 | 20.5% | 724 | 6.6% | 85% | 1.3% |
| | 1,683 | 20.1% | 521 | 6.2% | 1,787 | 21.4% | 629 | 7.5% | 209% | 6.3% |
| | 9,445 | 29.4% | 4,752 | 14.1% | 9,936 | 29.5% | 5,244 | 15.6% | 10.7% | 0.4% |
| | 3,618 | 25.5% | 1,447 | 10.6% | 3,571 | 25.7% | 1,342 | 9.7% | 90% | 3.1% |
| | 17,791 | 25.2% | 8,549 | 12.2% | 19,210 | 26.6% | 9,968 | 13.8% | 12.4% | 5.4% |
| | 1,827 | 11.3% | 1,735 | 14.3% | 3,872 | 31.5% | 2,029 | 16.5% | 15.2% | 0.7% |
| | 658 | 19.7% | 193 | 5.1% | 640 | 18.1% | 245 | 6.9% | 36.1% | 1.5% |
| | 1,577 | 10.7% | 1,113 | 10.6% | 1,414 | 29.9% | 536 | 11.2% | 17.9% | 11.5% |
| | 1,131 | 14.1% | 1,111 | 15.6% | 1,177 | 29.3% | 507 | 12.6% | 19.1% | 14.4% |
| | 1,717 | 17.5% | 1,166 | 8.6% | 1,762 | 17.2% | 714 | 7.0% | 6.9% | 1.5% |
| | 6,287 | 7.4% | 1,911 | 1.5% | 6,064 | 8.9% | 1,255 | 1.8% | 22.5% | 14.5% |
| | 5,569 | 14.6% | 1,664 | 4.7% | 6,108 | 15.0% | 2,049 | 5.0% | 15.9% | 3.0% |
| | 707 | 17.9% | 240 | 7.2% | 729 | 20.5% | 222 | 6.3% | 13.4% | 6.1% |
| | 1,127 | 17.9% | 796 | 6.9% | 1,813 | 19.8% | 671 | 7.2% | 4.5% | 2.7% |
| | 1,127 | 14.4% | 764 | 7.5% | 657 | 9.3% | 149 | 2.1% | 15.7% | 19.3% |
| | 3,611 | 9.1% | 1,011 | 2.9% | 2,413 | 27.9% | 898 | 10.4% | 5.8% | 1.5% |
| | 3,611 | 9.1% | 1,011 | 2.9% | 2,317 | 22.8% | 967 | 9.4% | 24.1% | 4.4% |
| | 1,611 | 18.8% | 402 | 4.7% | 617 | 15.4% | 145 | 3.6% | 17.6% | 1.0% |
| | 2,171 | 20.3% | 652 | 6.1% | 2,991 | 16.2% | 594 | 4.0% | 66% | 3.9% |
| | 1,683 | 20.1% | 521 | 6.2% | 17,309 | 32.2% | 9,276 | 17.2% | 5.6% | 1.2% |
| | 9,445 | 29.4% | 4,752 | 14.1% | 1,162 | 25.8% | 741 | 12.0% | 6.9% | 0.3% |
| | 3,618 | 25.5% | 1,447 | 10.6% | 737 | 16.3% | 196 | 4.7% | 66% | 10.5% |
| | 17,791 | 25.2% | 8,549 | 12.2% | 1,452 | 30.9% | 403 | 8.6% | 12.9% | 4.5% |
| | 1,827 | 11.3% | 1,735 | 14.3% | 310 | 23.9% | 150 | 11.6% | 12.5% | 22.5% |
| | 658 | 19.7% | 193 | 5.1% | 1,237 | 53.2% | 720 | 31.0% | 7.3% | 4.7% |
| | 1,577 | 10.7% | 1,113 | 10.6% | 253 | 15.1% | 57 | 3.4% | 48.7% | 2.8% |
| | 1,131 | 14.1% | 1,111 | 15.6% | 2,191 | 23.7% | 820 | 8.9% | 10.7% | 9.8% |
| | 1,717 | 17.5% | 1,166 | 8.6% | 1,292 | 26.5% | 426 | 8.8% | 8.1% | 1.3% |
| | 6,287 | 7.4% | 1,911 | 1.5% | 11,906 | 27.8% | 5,291 | 13.6% | 6.7% | 5.0% |
| | 5,569 | 14.6% | 1,664 | 4.7% | 396 | 22.3% | 83 | 4.7% | 7.5% | 2.4% |
| | 707 | 17.9% | 240 | 7.2% | 2,561 | 35.9% | 1,418 | 19.7% | 22.5% | 3.3% |
| | 1,127 | 17.9% | 796 | 6.9% | 12,009 | 23.4% | 5,875 | 11.4% | 9.9% | 9.0% |
| | 1,127 | 14.4% | 764 | 7.5% | 407 | 19.6% | 135 | 6.5% | 3.4% | 15.3% |
| | 3,611 | 9.1% | 1,011 | 2.9% | 960 | 23.6% | 324 | 7.7% | 24.2% | 3.3% |
| | 3,611 | 9.1% | 1,011 | 2.9% | 1,210 | 19.0% | 336 | 5.3% | 14.1% | 4.4% |
| | 1,611 | 18.8% | 402 | 4.7% | 10,445 | 8.6% | 19,468 | 23.7% | 5.4% | 4.7% |
| | 2,171 | 20.3% | 652 | 6.1% | 3,045 | 21.6% | 1,021 | 7.3% | 12.9% | 14.0% |
| | 1,683 | 20.1% | 521 | 6.2% | 6,771 | 18.4% | 2,461 | 6.7% | 5.4% | 8.0% |
| | 9,445 | 29.4% | 4,752 | 14.1% | 1,849 | 39.4% | 763 | 16.3% | 56.4% | 19.0% |
| | 3,618 | 25.5% | 1,447 | 10.6% | 8,107 | 32.6% | 4,006 | 16.1% | 12.1% | 3.9% |
| | 17,791 | 25.2% | 8,549 | 12.2% | 982 | 25.9% | 341 | 9.0% | 15.3% | 0.2% |
| | 1,827 | 11.3% | 1,735 | 14.3% | 1,298 | 23.4% | 559 | 10.1% | 17.3% | 1.4% |
| | 658 | 19.7% | 193 | 5.1% | 961 | 15.3% | 194 | 4.5% | 2.7% | 11.0% |
| | 1,577 | 10.7% | 1,113 | 10.6% | 1,112 | 23.8% | 385 | 8.2% | 2.3% | 12.6% |
| | 1,131 | 14.1% | 1,111 | 15.6% | 1,164 | 29.1% | 430 | 10.6% | 9.2% | 9.2% |
| | 1,717 | 17.5% | 1,166 | 8.6% | 3,226 | 18.0% | 1,027 | 5.7% | 10.1% | 8.1% |
| | 6,287 | 7.4% | 1,911 | 1.5% | 18,939 | 14.4% | 7,196 | 5.5% | 1.7% | 9.5% |
| | 5,569 | 14.6% | 1,664 | 4.7% | 4,705 | 29.7% | 2,288 | 14.2% | 12.5% | 10.7% |
| | 707 | 17.9% | 240 | 7.2% | 18,668 | 24.5% | 8,322 | 10.9% | 5.5% | 6.6% |
| | 1,127 | 17.9% | 796 | 6.9% | 1,408 | 13.2% | 440 | 4.1% | 7.6% | 10.1% |

# EDUCATION

## Children Served by Head Start and State-Funded Pre-Kindergarten—1994 [1]

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 33,570 | 30,231 | 613,266 | 10.4% |

## Student Characteristics, 1993-94 School Year

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1,854,222 | 35.4% | 33.2% | 18.7% | 2.3% |

## Per-Pupil Expenditures—1993-94 School Year

| | |
|---|---|
| $7,939,359,197 | $4,845 |



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## Children Served by Head Start and State-Funded Pre-Kindergarten—1994[1]

| State-funded pre-K enrollment | Head Start enrollment | Total 3 to 5 year-olds | % served |
|---|---|---|---|
| [illegible] | [illegible] | [illegible] | [illegible] |

## Student Characteristics, 1993-94 School Year

| District Enrollment | Percent Minority | Percent low income | Mobility percent | Percent Truant |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5,683 | 4.8% | 19.7% | 14.8% | 0.0% |
| 7,732 | 3.4% | 19.1% | 14.7% | 0.6% |
| 4,160 | 2.6% | 22.7% | 15.1% | 1.4% |
| 19,904 | 22.8% | 31.7% | 20.5% | 0.8% |
| 10,074 | 1.5% | 24.1% | 14.9% | 0.6% |
| 42,503 | 12.1% | 37.6% | 23.0% | 4.8% |
| 8,964 | 6.2% | 30.3% | 18.7% | 2.6% |
| 1,811 | 1.1% | 23.1% | 12.5% | 1.1% |
| 1,806 | 0.8% | 27.7% | 20.2% | 1.6% |
| 2,540 | 7.9% | 31.8% | 21.6% | 1.4% |
| 4,502 | 3.9% | 27.5% | 18.1% | 2.4% |
| 34,999 | 5.8% | 6.7% | 12.0% | 0.1% |
| 21,018 | 50.1% | 67.4% | 14.2% | 0.5% |
| 2,604 | 2.6% | 16.5% | 11.8% | 0.7% |
| 1,835 | 1.4% | 22.8% | 10.1% | 0.1% |
| 1,879 | 0.9% | 31.8% | 12.3% | 0.7% |
| 5,457 | 1.2% | 28.4% | 13.5% | 0.4% |
| 5,901 | 7.2% | 25.5% | 18.5% | 2.7% |
| 1,578 | 0.4% | 19.9% | 11.1% | 0.0% |
| 3,751 | 5.3% | 18.2% | 13.4% | 0.7% |
| 29,151 | 30.6% | 34.7% | 20.7% | 1.2% |
| 3,529 | 4.5% | 14.3% | 11.5% | 0.0% |
| 4,944 | 0.3% | 19.4% | 11.9% | 0.0% |
| 1,588 | 0.4% | 15.0% | 14.6% | 1.6% |
| 599 | 1.0% | 45.5% | 20.1% | 1.4% |
| 1,772 | 46.0% | 62.3% | 17.9% | 6.6% |
| 1,269 | 2.4% | 18.6% | 10.9% | 0.0% |
| 3,253 | 6.4% | 28.9% | 16.0% | 4.6% |
| 2,369 | 1.0% | 30.9% | 22.0% | 2.4% |
| 25,830 | 16.7% | 24.5% | 13.8% | 0.6% |
| 9,467 | 43.9% | 44.1% | 22.6% | 2.3% |
| 3,614 | 5.2% | 9.2% | 10.1% | 0.6% |
| 27,427 | 17.1% | 27.9% | 23.3% | 2.8% |
| 3,190 | 3.2% | 24.0% | 10.7% | 0.6% |
| 3,284 | 8.2% | 27.7% | 19.1% | 1.0% |
| 1,431 | 0.9% | 29.0% | 11.0% | 0.0% |
| 3,128 | 1.1% | 27.7% | 11.1% | 0.7% |
| 5,230 | 10.8% | 23.7% | 11.5% | 2.6% |
| 20,968 | 1.4% | 20.0% | 13.4% | 0.5% |
| 1,431 | 2.7% | 34.0% | 14.5% | 1.2% |
| 39,677 | 17.9% | 37.9% | 22.4% | 2.1% |
| 2,276 | 1.2% | 22.8% | 13.6% | 1.0% |
| 3,500 | 1.2% | 31.5% | 14.4% | 1.2% |
| 2,182 | 0.8% | 33.9% | 13.1% | 0.4% |
| 3,111 | 0.3% | 31.0% | 13.4% | 0.6% |
| 3,356 | 0.9% | 33.2% | 14.1% | 0.9% |
| 15,762 | 50.9% | 24.6% | 15.3% | 0.1% |
| 43,139 | 23.6% | 18.2% | 19.7% | 0.7% |
| 9,160 | 4.7% | 29.6% | 19.5% | 0.9% |
| 41,360 | 23.8% | 26.0% | 19.0% | 4.3% |
| 7,844 | 1.1% | 18.1% | 8.7% | 1.4% |

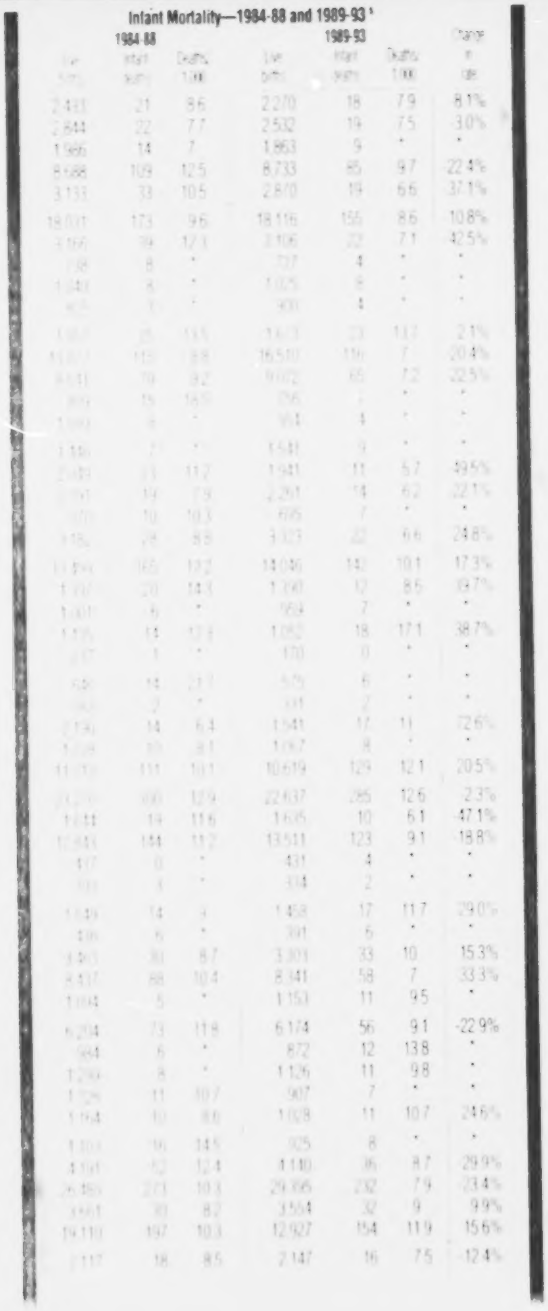
## Per-Pupil Expenditures—1993-94 School Year

| Education Fund | Revenue per pupil |
|---|---|
| $19,646,354 | $3,788 |
| $27,603,448 | $4,369 |
| $15,391,660 | $4,153 |
| $66,721,571 | $3,649 |
| $31,620,291 | $3,457 |
| $14,444,821 | $3,774 |
| $28,264,588 | $3,675 |
| $6,475,536 | $3,697 |
| $12,721,436 | $3,799 |
| $6,830,426 | $3,798 |
| $15,168,636 | $3,779 |
| $138,255,034 | $4,533 |
| $75,297,586 | $4,027 |
| $9,942,881 | $3,722 |
| $5,503,416 | $3,057 |
| $12,749,590 | $3,834 |
| $19,361,082 | $3,936 |
| $19,247,865 | $3,602 |
| $6,497,812 | $3,572 |
| $46,349,629 | $5,297 |
| $108,852,379 | $4,734 |
| $11,098,274 | $3,661 |
| $12,147,760 | $3,853 |
| $10,687,038 | $3,598 |
| $2,439,599 | $3,047 |
| $5,475,565 | $3,779 |
| $2,860,857 | $3,716 |
| $6,389,967 | $3,576 |
| $13,132,175 | $3,829 |
| $44,852,239 | $3,941 |
| $143,756,809 | $3,822 |
| $6,284,267 | $3,845 |
| $9,952,290 | $4,021 |
| $6,415,995 | $3,611 |
| $7,611,242 | $3,470 |
| $13,193,704 | $3,573 |
| $5,338,987 | $3,705 |
| $7,367,475 | $3,611 |
| $7,367,475 | $3,546 |
| $11,117,431 | $3,548 |
| $55,377,660 | $3,962 |
| $6,479,078 | $3,982 |
| $12,353,138 | $3,678 |
| $7,668,904 | $3,561 |
| $10,539,425 | $3,835 |
| $13,394,572 | $3,975 |
| $6,998,203 | $3,829 |
| $26,166,479 | $3,771 |
| $10,083,863 | $3,984 |
| $760,688,923 | $4,429 |
| $77,134,670 | $3,436 |

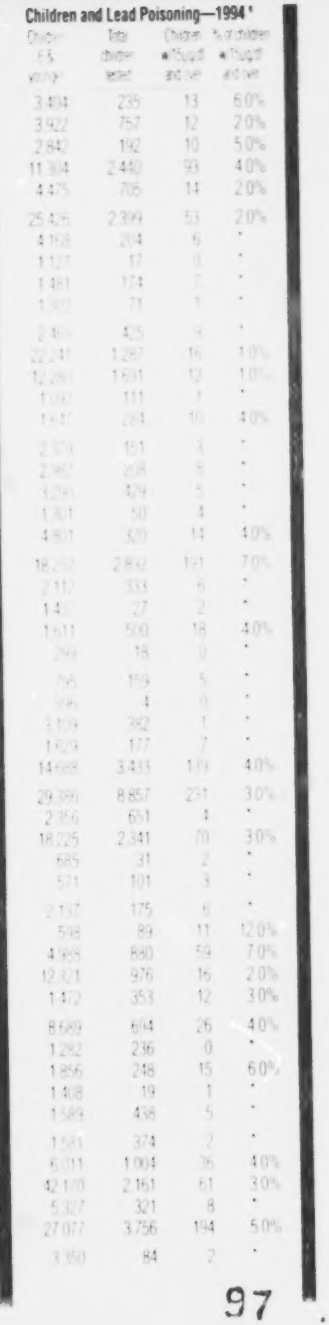
| | Lack of First Trimester Prenatal Care, 1983-93 [1] | | | | | | Infant Mortality—1984-88 and 1989-93 [1] | | | | | | Children and Lead Poisoning—1994 [1] | | | | Deaths to Children, 1990-93 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1983 | | | 1993 | | | 1984-88 | | | 1989-93 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Illinois | 39,331 | 178,820 | 22.0 | 39,116 | 190,709 | 20.5 | -6.7% | 901,589 | 10,547 | 11.7 | 953,444 | 10,124 | 10.6 | -9.2% | 201,118 | 215,291 | 17,611 | 8.0% | 3,288,183 | 5,789 | 18 | 3,661 | 63.0% |

## Lack of First Trimester Prenatal Care, 1983-93 [1]

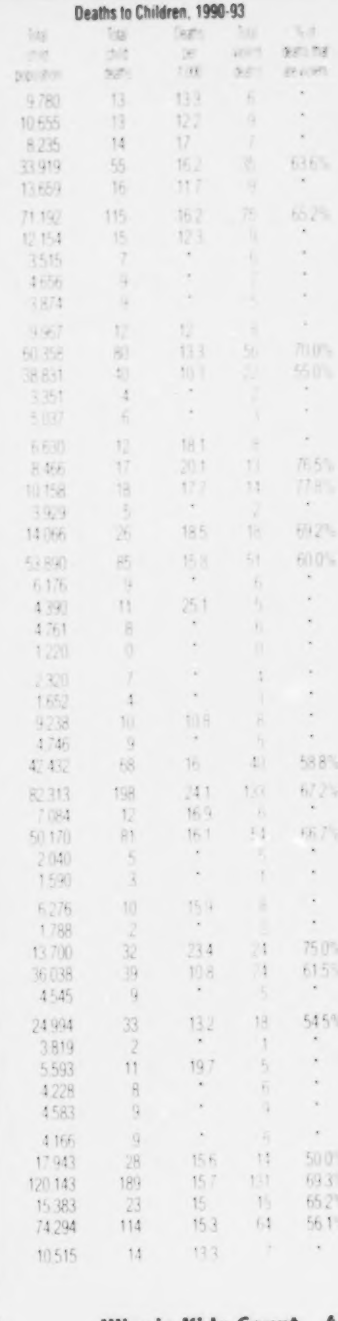
## Infant Mortality—1984-88 and 1989-93 [1]



## Children and Lead Poisoning—1994 [1]



## Deaths to Children, 1990-93



# Definitions And Methodology

### KEYING FOR TABLES

indicates that a rate does not meet standards of reliability or precision.
NA indicates figures were not available.

1) State new families at risk figures include 0 children in 1983 and 2 children in 1993 who had an unknown, out of state, or out of country residence.

2) State child abuse and neglect figure includes 1,524 children with unknown, out of state, or out of country residence.

3) State Pre-kindergarten figure includes 353 children in a multi county unit.

4) State lack of prenatal care figures include 0 children in 1983 and 8 children in 1993 who had an unknown, out of state, or out of country residence.

5) State infant mortality figures include 0 children in 1984-1988 and 41 children in 1989-1993 who had an unknown, out of state, or out of country residence.

6) State lead poisoning figures include 2 children in 1994 who had an unknown residence.

## Methodology and Sources

### STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

**High Risk Family Formation Index**

This indicator counts the number of first births where the mother was under the age of twenty, had less than 12 years of schooling, and was unmarried at the time of the birth of her child. This number is then divided by the total number of the first births to obtain a percentage of first births where the mother had these characteristics.
*Source: Illinois Department of Public Health Statistical Birth File*

**Unemployment**

The unemployment rate represents the average (over 12 months) percent of all persons unemployed in 1989 and 1994.
*Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security*

**Abuse and Neglect**

An indicated case of abuse and neglect refers to those children where the Department of Children and Family Services found evidence that abuse or neglect occurred. This number is smaller than the number of reported cases, a number of which are eventually proven unfounded. We present unduplicated counts. That is, a child was only counted once during a given year, regardless of the number of times an indication was made. A rate was constructed by comparing these figures to the under 18 population in 1990.
*Source: Child Welfare Careers Database, Chapin Hall Center for Children and DCFS, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 1A*

**Multi Service Indicator**

The multi-service indicator identifies the extent to which Illinois children age 0-19 were receiving service from one of five programs as of June 1st 1990 and 1995. The five programs are: 1) AFDC grant, 2) Medicaid, 3) Foodstamps, 4) foster care services or 5) Special Education services. This is compared to the total number of children age 0-19 from that year. The 1995 population figures identified here are calculated from 1990 census data which has been adjusted using estimates of the Illinois county population changes between 1990 and July 1, 1994. The assumption in using these 1994 estimates is that population changes in Illinois counties from 1990 to 1994 are the same across all age groups.
*Source: Medicaid, Foodstamps and AFDC grant data, Illinois Department of Public Aid; Foster Care, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services CYCIS database; Special Education data, 1993-1994 school year, Illinois State Board of Education; 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 1A*

### EDUCATION

**Head Start**

Children enrolled in a Head Start program as of October, 1994. The Head Start program serves children between ages three and five who, due to economic factors, are at risk of educational failure. A rate is constructed by comparing the figures to the estimated three-to five-year-old population in 1994.
*Source: Department of Health and Human Services, Region 5, Office of Head Start Administration*

**State-Funded Preschool Education**

Children receiving state funded preschool education refers to the number of children, ages three to five, enrolled in the state-funded Children at Risk of Academic Failure program as of October, 1994. A rate is constructed by comparing these figures to the three- to five-year-old population in 1994.
*Source: Illinois State Board of Education, Early Childhood Education Section*

**Estimates of the Three- to Five-Year-Old Population**

Estimates of the three to five year old population in 1994 were created by adding up all of the births in 1985, 1986 and 1987. A mobility- mortality adjuster was created by comparing the 1985-1987 total to the 1990 Census figures for three- to five-year-olds in 1990. After adding up the births in 1989, 1990 and 1991 (children that would have been three to five years old in 1994) the mobility- mortality adjuster was applied to create the estimate. This technique was suggested by the U.S. Department of Heath and Human Services.
*Source: Illinois Department of Public Health, Vital Statistics 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, and 1991; 1990 Census of Population and Housing Profiles*

### Per Pupil Revenues in Primary and Secondary Schools

A school district's unrestricted operational revenue per student is the amount a district has available for general education of public school students. Per pupil operational revenue is the revenue generated by local property taxes and state and federal aid, divided by the average daily attendance of students living in the district during the regular school year. The attendance rate is calculated by taking the average of the best three months (the same formula used in the calculation of the General State Aid). The local contributions consist of the Operating tax rate multiplied by the Equalized Assessed Value in 1992, and the money that is generated through the Corporate Personal Property Replacement fund in 1992. The total revenues represented here do not include categorical funds.

The average per pupil expenditure was compared to the recommended level of funding suggested by the Legislative Task Force on School Finance. The Task Force suggests a 1990 spending level of approximately $4,053 for an adequate k-12 education. This figure was increased by the rate of inflation to determine a 1994 adequacy level.

*Source: Coalition for Educational Rights.*

## HEALTH

### Births Without First Trimester Prenatal Care

The percent of live births without first trimester prenatal care is computed by dividing the number of births without prenatal care in the first three months of pregnancy by the total number of births. Both components of this percentage do not include births where the month when prenatal care began was unknown or missing.

*Source: Illinois Department of Public Health.*

### Infant Mortality

The rate of Infant Mortality is computed by dividing the number of deaths of persons under one year of age by the total number of live births that year and multiplying by 1,000. The years 1984 to 1988 and 1989 to 1993 were grouped to generate sufficient numbers to calculate rates. The percent change in the infant mortality rate shows the changes in the rate of infant mortality. A positive change indicates an increase in the infant mortality rate while a negative number denotes a decrease between the time spans.

*Source: 1984 - 1989, 1993 data, Vital Statistics Illinois, State of Illinois, 1990 - 1992 data, Special Tabulation of Illinois Department of Public Health vital records data tapes, Chapin Hall Center at the University of Chicago.*

### Lead Poisoning

Lead poisoning is calculated by the number of children under age 7 who have been tested and found to have blood levels at or exceeding 15 µg/dl in 1994.

*Source: Illinois Department of Public Health.*

### Youth Deaths

Youth death rates were computed by dividing all of the deaths of persons between 1 and 19 years of age from 1990 to 1993 by the total number of persons that age in 1991 and multiplying by 10,000. The years 1990 to 1993 were grouped to generate sufficient numbers to calculate rates. A violent death is defined as any death (including homicide, suicide, accidents) not caused by health problems (such as heart attack).

A single year (1991) of population figures was used to calculate a rate because of the lack of general population data. This technique is used and recommended by the Population Reference Bureau and the Illinois Department of Public Health.

*Source: Youth Death data provided by the Illinois Department of Public Health. Population Data Provided by the Illinois Department of Public Health in conjunction with the Bureau of the Census.*

### Determination of Rural and Urban

For the purposes of this report a rural county is defined as one which is not part of a metropolitan statistical area, as defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census; or one which is a part of a metropolitan statistical area but has a population of less than 60,000. All other counties are considered urban. There are 84 rural counties in Illinois.

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Kenilworth, Illinois

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Latino Institute

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**Illinois Kids Count**
**Supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation**



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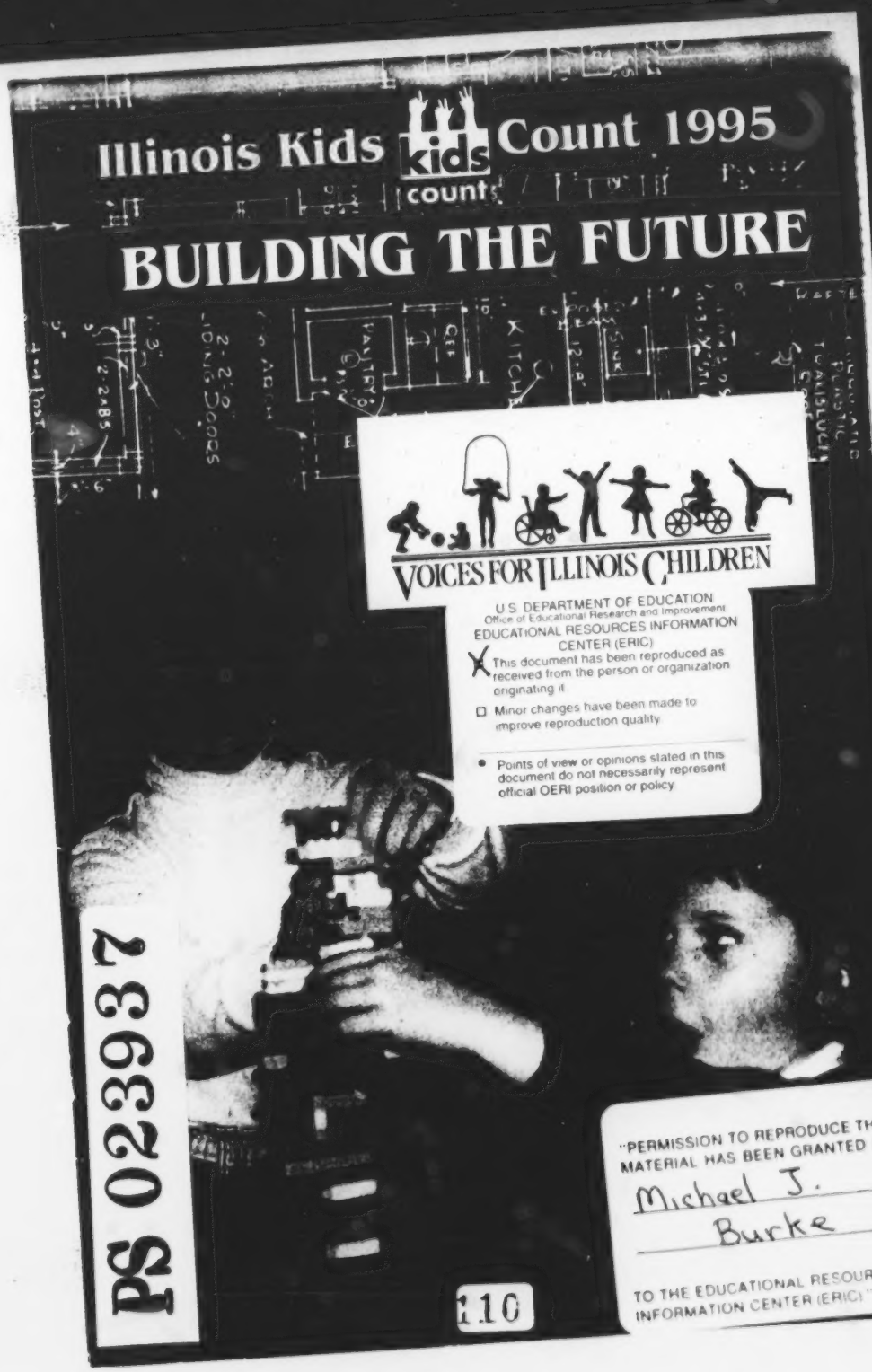
# Illinois Kids Count 1995

# BUILDING THE FUTURE



VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN

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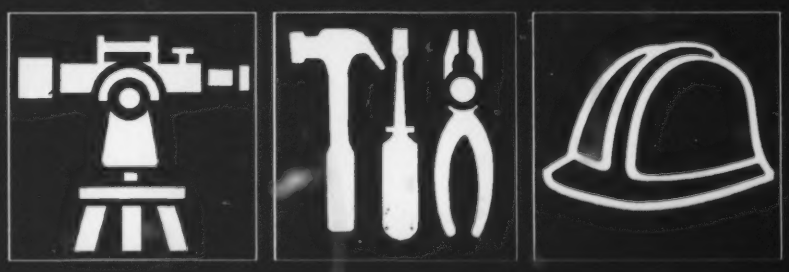
kids count

Illinois Kids Count 1995: Building the Future highlights strategies that are being pursued in Illinois to improve the lives of children and their families.

Building the future takes effort, careful forethought, and protection of investment. All of us — community members, business leaders, workers, advocates, parents, and policy makers — must take well thought out and deliberate steps to ensure that our children succeed.

Building the Future highlights a handful of successful strategies operating throughout Illinois. As you will note on the response form at the back of this booklet, we encourage you to tell us about others.

This booklet summarizes more in-depth material contained in a detailed report that shares the same title, *Illinois Kids Count 1995: Building the Future*. The more detailed report includes: county-by-county statistics on child well-being; a recap of a panel discussion with experts who debated how we can make life better for kids; and more complete descriptions of the strategies that follow. To order a copy of this more detailed report, see the response form at the end of this booklet.





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*All children need a secure and developmentally appropriate environment. Stimulating, early childhood programs can prepare children to be more successful in school, and are especially important for children at risk of academic failure.*

**Lessons Begin at Birth**

A few blocks from downtown Peoria in a new red-brick building, 370 children from ages 3 to 6 are receiving the kind of early education that research shows leads to greater success in school. The Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center is so well equipped and provides such comprehensive services, that it could be perceived as a one-of -a kind "model program" that just can't be replicated. Look a little deeper and the truth emerges: The elements that make it work are already available in many communities.

With 60 local and national experts serving on the committees that designed the center, Valeska Hinton became a $7 million dreamer's ideal of what early education should be. Medical and dental services are offered on site, prompting a near-perfect immunization rate. The 20 classrooms are split into four "villages" where the teachers and families work together and get to know each other. A parent training room with a full-time teacher lets parents attend school while their children do. All of these components contribute to a quality early childhood experience.

A suggested state policy also recognizes the importance of starting early. Under the "Ready to Learn" measure, school districts would be eligible for grants to create all-day pre-kindergartens, and child care centers would be encouraged to raise their standards for education, parent involvement, professional development and health services.

# INVIGORATE OUR COMMUNITIES

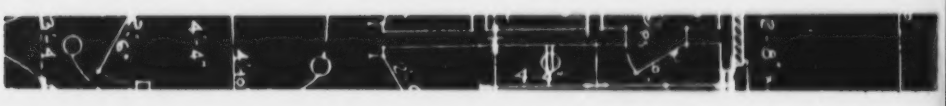
*Too often, changes in programs and the creation of new programs are developed at the state and national level and don't include local input. Local involvement in developing solutions helps to ensure that the problems are properly understood, that the solutions build on community strengths and that community members are invested in the success of the solution.*

### Rebuilding from the Ground Up

A first glance at the intersection of 39th Street and South Michigan Avenue in Chicago reveals a picture of dilapidated buildings, vacant lots and the gradual deterioration of a once vibrant community. A more thorough survey of the landscape in this neighborhood called Grand Boulevard, leads to the discovery of the Elliot Donnelley Youth Center Art Park. Elaborately designed totem poles, newly restored murals, handmade benches and brightly colored playground equipment — each created by local artists and youth — exemplify the deep layer of vitality, commitment and energy which reverberates throughout this community.

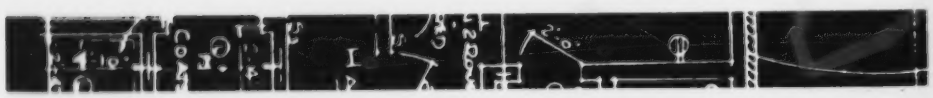
According to Marrice Coverson, Director of Elliot Donnelley Youth Center, the Art Park symbolizes both the transformation of Grand Boulevard into a revitalized mecca of culture and history, and the ability to use art as a tool for sculpting a work of beauty from anything — vacant lot, abandoned building or treeless street. The significance of this project represents an ideal backdrop for a community committed to change through local engagement, resident participation and institutional reform.





Through more than 15 separate initiatives, collaboration and community engagement are strategies being put to the test throughout Grand Boulevard. Results from this hard work include: extensive community involvement in school reform and school funding; economic development and community beautification projects; and the creation of several collaborative programs focused on youth. Rejuvenating a community like this, however, requires more than just determination and energy. Internal goal setting and drive combined with external guidance and support lay the foundation for re-building the community.





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*A comprehensive approach to supporting families starts with prevention and extends into all reaches of family support. This approach realizes that families don't experience problems in isolation and that the most effective use of resources is to address families as a whole.*

**Providing Comprehensive Health Care**

At 18, Martina had dreams of going to college — not of having a baby. But she was pregnant. She poured out her fears to Patricia Moehring, a case manager immediately assigned to her by the Southern 7 Health Department, which administers public health services in the seven counties in southern Illinois.

Moehring linked Martina to a doctor, helped her obtain economic assistance to pay medical bills, referred her to the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) education and supplemental feeding program and introduced her to Step-Up, designed to help single moms go to college. The strategy — providing access to comprehensive services through a single case manager — paid off. Today, Martina, the proud mother of healthy, 10-month-old Crystal, is studying accounting.

Elsewhere in the state, integrating health services is making a difference. Before pre-natal and WIC services were integrated in DuPage County, a pregnant woman who needed both would have to make two separate appointments, travel to different clinics and provide almost identical eligibility information for two separate programs.

Today, a pregnant woman who comes in to the DuPage Health Department for pre-natal care gets a complete physical, is counseled by a nutritionist and dental hygienist, and receives education about family planning and sexually transmitted diseases. This type of service integration is a key to meeting a family's full health needs.

# TAILOR SCHOOLS FOR TODAY'S STUDENTS

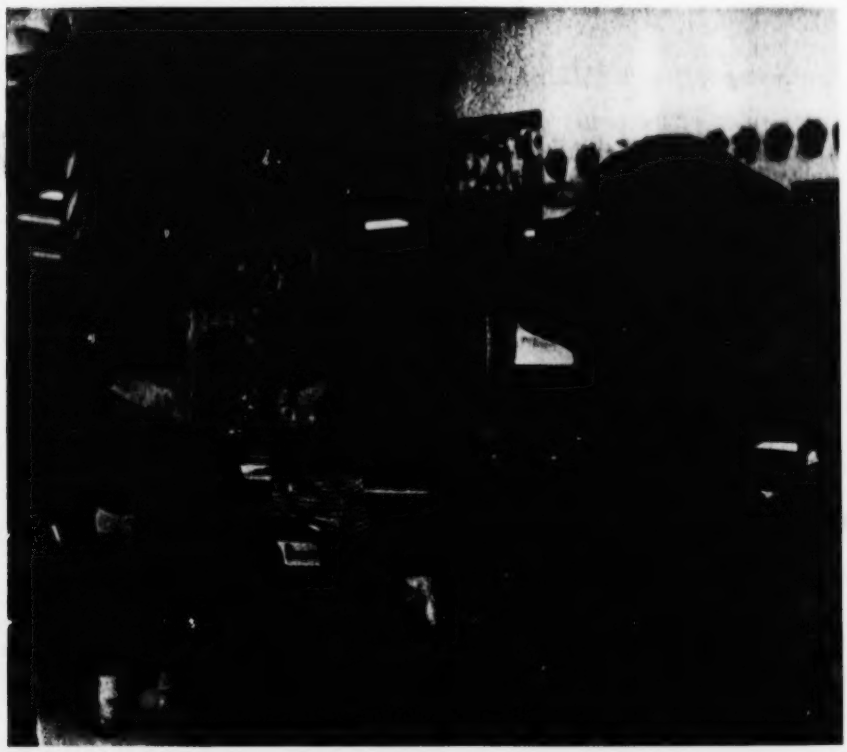
*Preparing today's children for the 21st century means creatively using current resources and redesigning educational materials to meet children's needs. Schools must provide children with appropriate skills and tools to be productive in our changing world.*

**Preparing Kids for Tomorrow's World**

The hallways are dim and the lockers empty at the Hoffman Technical Center in Machesney Park outside of Rockford, but three computer screens are glowing in the wire-strewn office where Sandy Sunderman is laying a path to the 21st Century. Her fingers flying between keyboard and mouse, she is loading programs onto a server computer that will function as a central nervous system for as many as 100 other computers around the school. This school district realizes that computer literacy is what Rockford's machine tool manufacturers and financial services firms seek out among their job applicants.

Like computer knowledge, bilingualism is a marketable skill, and thus engages students who might otherwise become disillusioned about their economic future. Inter-American School on Chicago's North Side is attended by Spanish-speaking children as well as students from non-Spanish-speaking homes. The school leapfrogs beyond traditional bilingual programs by teaching all students to read, write and speak in both English and Spanish. Like the Harlem schools where students rotate through a computer-aided curriculum, the classrooms at Inter-American go back and forth between English and Spanish, every day, all year long. *¡Es verdad! Todos los estudiantes hablan español y inglés.*

Firing up the imaginations and career drives of young children will always be a primary role of schools, and while many routinely succeed in that mission, the high dropout rate in Illinois high schools and the continued struggle in so many school districts suggests that tens of thousands of students are not being reached. Better funding is one answer, especially in districts short-changed by Illinois' property-tax-dependent system of school finance. But more important than money — or a roomful of computers, for that matter — is a vision that grabs the students and holds them.



## ESTABLISHING MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

*The difference between a child who succeeds and a child who fails can be the continual guidance and presence of another individual — whether parent, other adult or peer. Developing tutor/mentor relationships to provide this one-on-one guidance can be effective in improving the chances of success in school and all aspects of life.*

### Mentoring Makes a Difference

Carol Ann is a 23-year-old woman with a six-year-old son and a new six-week-old baby. Marj Mitchell is her 63-year-old friend and pillar of strength; she has been with Carol Ann one morning nearly every week for the last three years. They talk, go to a Freeport park with the kids, and do a variety of activities. Before hooking up with her mentor Carol Ann was severely isolated and lacked parenting skills. "With my first child I didn't know anything about how to be a parent; my mother took care of him," she says. "I am changed with Chad. Now I get up with him at night when he needs me."

As in any matchmaking, putting two people together doesn't guarantee a viable relationship. But for thousands of children and adults in Illinois, mentoring programs like this one, run from a church basement, provide what no bureaucracy or support agency can deliver: the type of personal attention that is helping to bring Carol Ann out of her shell and become a better parent.

The spark plug behind another mentoring effort is Juri Jones of the Chicago Academy of Sciences. She has taken 14 teenagers under her wing in a two-year program that gently encourages them into a challenging range of adult roles. They serve as tour guides at the museum, conduct laboratory research with Northwestern University graduate students, and during the summer become mentors themselves at week-long camp sessions with younger children.



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*The current welfare system doesn't provide families with the tools they need to reach and maintain self-sufficiency. Building bridges from welfare to work enables families to take and keep jobs. This strategy involves supporting families economically, providing them with education and job training to help them get and keep a job, and assisting them to find affordable child care.*

**Staying in School, Keeping a Job**

On the other side of the tracks in Decatur, where the wood houses are crumbling and crack cocaine is for sale each night, a neat storefront offers young girls in trouble something they can't find elsewhere: child care and transportation. For teenaged mothers facing the strain and loneliness of raising a child, those two simple ingredients, along with a good dose of moral support, can make all the difference.

"It's better now that people are helping," says 19-year-old Shelly Manley, mother of nine-month-old Alexandria. With her daughter's father in jail, Shelly couldn't have finished high school and continued working at a nursing home without the assistance she got from the Teen Parent Initiative. The Teen Parent Initiative (TPI) of the Illinois Department of Public Aid, provides, in addition to child care and bus money, a wide range of support to stabilize new families and keep young parents in school.

While TPI focuses on keeping teens in school, the Work Pays program provides a financial boost to recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) who join the workforce. Until late 1993, taking a low-paid job in Illinois usually meant sliding deeper into poverty as both cash payments and other benefits were reduced or eliminated. Not surprisingly, AFDC recipients often quit their jobs soon after starting, demoralized by a system that actually penalized their work ethic.

The new program rewards work by only reducing cash payments $1 for every $3 earned, and continues to provide health benefits, child care assistance and food stamps as long as income remains below the poverty level. Public Aid employees have promoted the program with buttons, posters and in-person pitches, prompting a 100 percent increase in the number of working recipients, from 14,100 in October 1993 to 28,400 by May 1995.

The Teen Parent Initiative and Work Pays cannot, by themselves, alter the economic or social landscape of Illinois. But by providing encouragement and incentives to pursue school and work, they provide badly needed bridges away from dependency and towards economic self-sufficiency.

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# ADVOCATE FOR AT-RISK KIDS

*Some of our most at risk children are those involved with the juvenile court. These children often have no one to look out for their best interests and subsequently "fall through the cracks." One way to ensure that a child's best interests are being served is to link a caring individual to that child — an independent advocate who follows the child's case from beginning to end.*

### Speaking Up for the Most Vulnerable Children

Call him Billy. Call her Sally. Or Shavon. Or Hector. Or Lee. The names go on and on as the tragic number among their ranks continues to climb. They are the child victims of abuse and neglect.

But sometimes the Billys of our state get lucky. Sometimes they get teamed up with a volunteer with the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program.

"It's our role to keep the cases moving through the system to get kids to a permanent solution as soon as possible," says Margaret Green, who for the past five years has directed the Lee and Carroll County CASA program.

CASA volunteers collect information from various sources so that court officials and caseworkers have the background materials they need to make better informed decisions; but, more importantly, so that CASA volunteers can make an independent recommendation to the court that is strictly in the best interest of the child.

"I had one social worker complain to me that a CASA volunteer assigned to one of her cases thought her case is the most important one," Susan Swegle , a CASA case manager recalls. "My reaction was, 'Yes!' That's what I want to hear."



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# PROMOTE FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES

*Parents spend more and more of their time at work. Unhealthy and un-supportive work environments can break down employee morale and threaten the health and safety of the whole family. Family friendly policies and services help to create a workplace that enables more families to keep their jobs, increases productivity, and strengthens the whole family.*

### Supporting Parents, Gaining a Competitive Edge

They're producing more than gaskets and sealing products at Fel-Pro, Incorporated. They're making stronger families and a more committed workforce.

The Skokie-based company is responding to the reality that dual-income families and single-parent families are on the rise. As the workforce has evolved, so, at least, has this workplace — re-designing employee policies to better accommodate the changing needs of working families. This, in turn, boosts the company's bottom line.

"We don't think of ourselves as being generous or charitable to our employees," explains Fel-Pro Co-chairman David Weinberg. "We think of it as good business as well as being the right thing to do. The reason is obvious: We build a sense of loyalty among our employees."

The reason is also well-documented. A 1993 study of Fel-Pro by University of Chicago researchers shows that workers who take advantage of the benefits have the highest performance evaluations and the lowest intentions of leaving Fel-Pro.

"Working at Fel-Pro and their benefits is the best thing that ever happened to me," one 20-year factory employee told the researchers. "As a result, I have complete concern for and loyalty to the company."

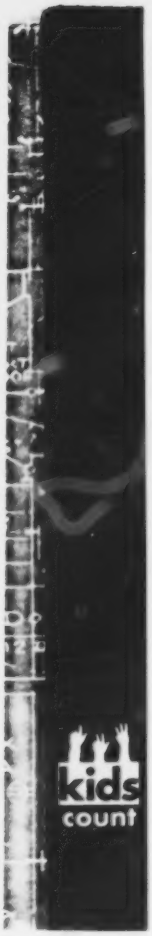
# BUILDING THE FUTURE

Building the Future takes great time and energy — the collective will and action of neighbors, policy makers, service providers, and business and community leaders to ensure that all of our children grow up healthy and strong.

### What You Can Do

You have a role to play in building the future, in ensuring that our children grow up well nutured and well educated. The strategies that we have outlined in this report are efforts that all of us can take part in. Here are ten simple things that you can do:

- Spend more time with children
- Register to vote and use your voting power wisely
- Join a tutor or mentor program
- Organize a neighborhood meeting and discuss the special needs of children in your community
- Encourage family friendly policies in your workplace
- Volunteer time in the classroom or after school
- Write your legislator on a children's issue
- Donate materials to a local school, library or child care center
- Keep an eye out for kids in your neighborhood
- Join Voices for Illinois Children — and add your voice to hundreds of others speaking up for kids

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